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THE HUSBAND'S SECRET

THE
HUSBAND'S SECRET

BY
RICHARD DOWLING

AUTHOR OF "UNDER ST. PAUL'S," "THE WEIRD SISTERS,"
"THE MYSTERY OF KILLARD," ETC.

In Three Volumes

VOL. III.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A WHITE HAND— <i>Continued</i>	I

FROM THE CONDEMNED CELL	35
-----------------------------------	----

THE RESPECTABLE SEAFARING MAN	77
---	----



	PAGE
THE ONE AND THE OTHER	115

O'CALLAGHAN-BRIEN'S DAUGHTER	159
--------------------------------------	-----

WON BY NINE	191
-----------------------	-----

THE EVES OF TWO CHRISTMAS NUMBERS.	221
------------------------------------	-----

A WHITE HAND

(Continued)

VOL. III.

B





A WHITE HAND

(Continued).

JAMES RUSSELL was of the medium height, dark in complexion, very shy and very enthusiastic. His disposition was impulsive, and, like most men of ardent natures, the majority of his impulses were good. Although a younger son of a poor Hampshire baronet, it never once crossed his mind that fate had in this matter ordered his lot hardly. He fortified himself with quasi-republican notions, and held with Burns that the man's the man for all that; that labour is the head fountain of dignity, and that every man ought to work, ought to be able to show his *raison d'être* in deeds. Let nobles help to guide

the state, and county gentlemen act as magistrates and grand-jurors ; let younger sons take to the Army, Navy, Church, law, literature ; let working-men be working-men, and so on. Where he did quarrel with fate was that it produced such an inferior, ignorant, and generally obtuse set of theatrical managers, who did not know a good comedy when they saw it, and could not be made to feel the force of the points in a thrilling melodrama, when these points were as plain as the bullseyes on the targets at Wimbledon. He believed in Man and declared his belief ; when accused of not at all believing in the genus theatrical manager, he admitted the justice of the impeachment, and declared that the exception proved the rule.

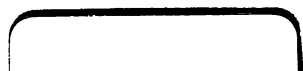
He had been a visitor to the house in Hervey's Dingle, and had grown communicative to Emily Crayford ; had imparted to her his high estimate of Man and Man's mission, and had likewise filled her heedful ears with strong rhetoric against the unworthy human monsters who guarded the

portals of theatrical fame, and hurled back conscious merit into the night of despair.

It was not often that Emily Crayford met at the Dingle a genius with a grievance. Her nature, like his, was dark, shy, sympathetic. She felt more interested and at rest when he was her father's visitor than at any other time. He was so gentle to her, so generous to all the good world, and fierce against all evil men and things, that he stirred the deepest depths of her nature, and seemed to give her the air of a wider world to breathe. He had, too, little anecdotes of London's great men. Poets, painters, statesmen, judges, discoverers, apostles of science—all passed in procession through his talk, and held the girl interested as she had never been by any other man. Then, against this background of splendid familiarity with illustrious names, stood his own grave figure, full of all nobility, and most sadly wanting in success, and wanting in success because of no fault of his own, but because of the blind ignorance and dense stupidity of men whose duty



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12

THE HUSBAND'S SECRET


love and him, of him and love. When she awoke next morning she felt as though all the barren dust of earth had vanished, and the mellow fruit-time of the world was at hand.

She saw him waiting for her under her window, and hurried, and then delayed, and reproached herself for delaying, and left her room in haste, but paused for nothing in the hall, quickly approached the front-door, then drew back as if surprised in something she should not do, crept out by a back way, and ran towards where he walked upon the terrace. But when she saw him she stood quite still. His back was towards her, his face towards the front-door. His back was towards her, and he stood and stood and took no notice of her. Her dog ran by. "Come here, Juno."

"Emily!" He was now holding her hand and looking at her downcast face. "I thought you'd never come. It's an hour to breakfast. Will you have these flowers? Shall we walk down the Dingle to the pool? I feel as though

someone had made me a present of all the world, and I wanted you to come and admire this little bit of it and keep it for yourself for ever; sunshine and sky and trees and birds and streams—all to be for ever as it is now.”

But when the matter came to Mr. Crayford's ears, he stormed and raged and would not be appeased. He felt doubly bitter against young Russell. It seemed as though the latter had abused his hospitality. What, a pauper for his daughter! A man without position, profession, income! It was monstrous. And to think that this young man, who had always been made welcome to his house, could behave in such a dishonourable manner! Could make so base a use of a friendliness shown to him purely out of regard to his father, and because of no merit of his own! Merit of his own! Pretty merits he had! A pauper radical; a penniless vagabond play-actor! True, he came of a good stock, but that was no merit of his, and he had done all he could to ruin the prestige of his family




by associating with the scum of London, and holding intercourse with those pestiferous republicans with their Rights of Man treason and their anti-church profanities ! Let him never once again dare to cross the threshold of the Dingle house ; let his name never be mentioned in the house which he had sought to wound in its most sacred interest.

This tirade was not delivered to either young Russell himself or to Emily, but before Mrs. Crayford, upon Mr. Crayford's getting a letter from the young man asking if Mr. Crayford would be opposed to the writer as a son-in-law, supposing he were able to make a very material advance in his worldly prospects.

Mrs. Crayford listened in silence and in pain. Her own feeling was that Emily would have more money than enough for both. She knew that the girl had given her whole heart to Russell ; for mother and daughter were good friends, and Emily had confided all to her mother on the condition that nothing of it was to reach the father's ears

until James wrote. The mother felt that Russell had gentle blood, a blameless character, good looks, and kind manners. The girl had the money and he had blood, and they loved each other, so why should it not be? But Edmund Crayford was her lord and master, and when he spoke she felt bound to follow his will, although she did so with a heavy heart and reluctant feet.

Mr. Crayford was not a hard-hearted man. He, indeed, rarely appealed to his heart. He prided himself on the possession of sound practical common sense, and to his mind sound practical common sense was all that any man had need of to direct his mind or govern his actions. He loved his daughter in his own fashion, but he could not for a moment admit that giving her to a man like Russell would be a sign of wisdom, or a prudent way of proving his love for her. He knew better than she what was good for her, and he had not the smallest intention of letting her own feelings or this young man make a fool of her. He was no casuist, nor did he trouble himself much with



complicated mental problems. Upon reading Russell's letter he had made up his mind to put a stop to this folly, and accordingly wrote the young man a decisive letter. Regard to the offender's father and the old friendship between the baronet and himself caused him to moderate greatly the force of his written words. He formally acknowledged the offer and the honour it did him and his daughter. He pointed out quietly but firmly the position of the aspirant, and wound up by declaring a little hotly that: "Neither now nor at any other time could I think of accepting the proposal you make; and as you are a man of honour and come of an honourable family, I hope you will respect my decision, and abstain from communicating in any way with Miss Crayford for the present."

After the despatch of this letter a month passed, and nothing further was heard of James Russell by Mr. Crayford. The mother had informed her daughter of the purport of that letter. Emily received the news without betraying any emotion

or uttering a word. Her face grew a shade paler but otherwise she remained unchanged. The days went on, and still Emily showed no sign save that the paleness which had at the first been transient now became permanent. The quick sight of the mother noticed too that the girl's eyes were often weak and red in the mornings, and that she shunned the sunlight and grew more attached to solitude.


One night, as the mother passed the girl's door, she heard a sob, and going in found Emily on her knees by the bed. The mother raised her.

"My child, my child, you will kill yourself. Won't you talk to me?"

"He's going away to his brother in America. I'm so miserable and so lonely. I wish I were dead. Go away, mother; go away. I shall be better alone. Did you love my father?"

"My child, my darling child!"

"If you loved him as I love James you will know how I feel. But, mother, go. I am tired, and I only tire you with my useless talk. He is



going in a few weeks, mother, and I'll never think of anyone else—never, mother. Oh never! When you loved my father when you were young—you will remember—but I'm only talking useless talk, and you are tired, mother; go. I shall go to bed and forget all—if I can sleep."

"Emily, my only child! Hush! you will make yourself ill. Hush! that is your father's step. He might hear. Hush!"

"He is gone to his room now, mother. Suppose when you loved him long ago you heard him pass you by that way, and you knew he was going away for ever—for ever! No, mother, I won't cry now. I couldn't if I tried. I think I'm angry."

"With me, my darling child?"

"No, mother. With something—I don't know what; it's hardly my father. Good-night, little mother. I'll go to bed now, and be down to breakfast. Good-night, little mother. You must go now."

Some hint of the girl's condition must have

reached her father through Mrs. Crayford, for he was more restless and irascible than usual, shunned the house, said little to anyone, and made curt replies to questions. Emily had never spoken to him about the matter, nor he to her. When he was angry he stormed, and he would have preferred an interview of violent reproaches and tears to this meek protest of sad eyes and languid gentleness. He professed a horror of scenes, but had no objection to a row when it was a row of his own provoking. As soon as he had despatched the letter to young Russell he made up his mind to ignore altogether the fact of the proposal, and in some obscure way he fancied others would follow his example. To Mrs. Crayford had been intrusted the duty of telling their daughter that James Russell had asked leave to pay his addresses to her, and had been peremptorily refused. Mr. Crayford was too proud to ask how matters stood between the two young people, and mother and daughter knew him too well to dream of pleading against his determination. But now his

own eyes, arm them as he might against observation, could not help seeing the hopeless carriage of the girl and the weary lassitude of her manner. He chafed under the mute reproach of her dejection. Of late poachers had been making free with his preserves, and he now tried to bury his home-trouble in violent anger and active measures against those nocturnal marauders.

As the period of Russell's departure for South America approached, Mr. Crayford gave himself almost wholly up to his gun and his farm. All day he was out attending a fair, inspecting a new threshing-machine, or on a neighbour's ground, or superintending the labourers on his own.

At the foot of the Dingle was the Pond, and just beyond the Pond the thicket sacred to pheasants. One night the poachers came there, and no fewer than seven brace of birds were missing next day. Mr. Crayford was in a rage such as he rarely indulged in. At bottom he did not grudge the birds just now. James Russell was to sail in a week. Emily displayed symptoms of still deeper

melancholy, and the father felt glad of something that he might talk loudly and angrily about, and of an excuse for not going back to the drawing-room after dinner. These scoundrelly poachers had come early in the night, and, by Jove, he himself should look after them, and he would. So every evening he shouldered a double-barrelled gun when dinner was over, and walked the thicket in no enviable mood.

He did not mean to shoot those men. He simply desired to show them that they could not continue their courses. So he loaded one barrel with blank to frighten them should they appear, and the other barrel with duck-shot for his own defence should they attack him.

One Friday evening he left the house in better spirits than usual. It was close upon nine o'clock. The sky was overcast with rugged clouds that now and then let the full moon through to show the whole landscape in a soft silver calm. Alow all was breathless, not a blade of grass moved in the still air; but aloft a breeze blew, hurrying

the torn clouds towards the south. With his gun over his shoulder, the old man made a fine figure in the irregular waves of moonlight as he walked towards the thicket beyond the Pond. It was Friday evening, and on Monday young Russell would sail for foreign parts; on Tuesday there would be a hundred leagues of land and a hundred leagues of sea between the presumptuous youth and the foolish girl. That would be well.

He had now passed the Pond, and paused close to the thicket, about thirty yards from the gap in the hedge.

Yes, on Tuesday both of these silly young people would know that there was no further use for hope, and he would not be troubled by the thought that this young man was merely biding his time in London until he, Crayford, should be worn out or cajoled into consent to a monstrous proceeding.

How dark it was when suddenly the clouds came across the moon! Not a bad night for

those poachers if they thought of coming ; they could see their way in the moonlight and work in the dark.

Hist ! What was that ? Footsteps crushing the brambles in the thicket. They were coming towards the gap, with a view, no doubt, to seeing if they were watched from the house side of the preserve.

Hist ! They were within a few yards of the gap, stealing softly—the scoundrels, the ruffians ! Now was the time to give them a lesson they wouldn't forget in a hurry.

Ready ! Right blank, left shot. How dark ! still bright enough to see the foremost man in the gap. There he was as plain as eyes ever saw. A powerful hulking-looking ruffian, but impossible to identify at such a distance in the dark. If the moon would only come out. Challenge him !

“Who's that ?”

No answer. No movement.

“Who's that in the gap there, I say ?”

Still no reply.

"This is my place. You are in my preserve after nightfall. Come for my pheasants, no doubt. Give me your name and address at once, or come out and go with me to the house."

The man in the gap drew his figure together, and retreated a step without saying a word.

Mr. Crayford cocked his gun. At the click the man retreated another pace. Mr. Crayford advanced and raised the gun to his shoulder.

"If you don't speak, I'll fire. I'll have no more poaching here, my fine fellow. Speak, or I'll mark you for the police," cried Mr. Crayford, adding mentally: "I'll frighten him if he doesn't give me his name. He won't be in a hurry to come again if he sees a flash, and thinks I've nearly marked him for the police."

The man continued to retire cautiously, still keeping his front to the old man.

Mr. Crayford increased his speed, the other stepped quickly backward.

"One, two," counted Mr. Crayford. "One—two—three."

Bang !

The clouds drifted quickly away, and the white moonlight gleamed upon the white smoke.

Mr. Crayford stepped rapidly aside, and bent and looked under the smoke.

For a moment the figure of the man was clearly revealed ; then it tottered. A dull cry broke the silence following the report of the gun. The man staggered, stood upright again, staggered forward, and throwing aloft his hands fell in the clear moonlight, and lay motionless in the undergrowth.

"My God, I gave him the wrong barrel ! A charge of duck at five-and-twenty paces ! Any one here ? Help—for God's sake, help ! I've shot a man !"

Paralysed by horror, he dropped his gun and leaned on it. He could not have stirred to save his own life. A little behind him, only a few hundred yards, was the spot where in the early morning that father had fired, and by accident shot his own son. Now had he fired merely to

frighten a trespasser, and the man had fallen, and he had found that in his excitement he had mistaken the trigger and discharged the wrong barrel, giving this man who showed no sign of attacking him the charge which was intended to be used only as a last desperate resource to preserve his own life. It was too horrible! Was no one near? None of the servants to succour the fallen man? He could not move. He could scarcely keep his feet. What should he do? His legs had often threatened to fail him, but now all their strength was gone. What should he do? Fire off the other barrel in the air, and call out for help again.

Bang!

"Help there! Help, I say! There's a man shot here. Help, I say!"

To save his life he could not have moved his feet. Every moment he expected his trembling knees to give way beneath him, and that he would sink prone and helpless.

Again he shouted, and at last heard the sound

of feet approaching. The servants had heard the reports; missed their master, and were now hurrying in search of him.

"Bailey," said he, when the steward came up to where he stood, "I fired a shot-charge instead of a blank into the gap at a man, and he fell, and something has gone wrong with my legs and I can't move. Take Dandridge with you, and bring the man to the house, and send some one with the dog-cart for Dr. Fields, and send John to me to help me. I can't walk, Bailey, without help. Don't stand there, but do what I tell you. D'ye hear me, sir? No gaping at me. I shall be all right in a few hours; go at once and see to him. Take all care of him. Bring him in the back way, and put him in a back room. Here, John, that's it; but I can't walk quickly. I hope it isn't that scoundrel Turner I've shot. Let the ladies know nothing until I tell them. Slowly, John—damme, John! can't you do better than that? I've got my death, I think." Then suddenly he remembered

something. "Turner," he muttered ; "it can't be Turner. It can't be any of *that* gang. I saw it! I saw it! Not one of Turner's or any of his gang. It was white—white in the moon-light as he fell. Good heavens, what have I done!"

Painfully and laboriously the old man tottered up the glen, leaning on the shoulder of the footman. John carried the gun ; and as Mr. Crayford went he muttered and mumbled to himself.

It took him half-an-hour to reach the house. His wife, pale with alarm and wistful with expectation, stood in the doorway with a shawl over her head.

"What has happened, Edmund?" she asked tremulously ; "what has happened? Are you hurt?"

"No, no ; not hurt. Come in ; I want to speak with you. Give me the gun, John ; I can carry it now, and take care of myself. Let me know when—when *they* come."

He took the gun by the muzzle, and leaning

on his wife, drew it clanking after him until he reached the dining-room. The table had been cleared, and the long dark oak-panelled room lay in a deep gloom save where, in brackets by the huge chimney-piece, four candles burned.

Mr. Crayford closed the door, and with feet still tottering and feeble led the way to the fireplace.

"Agnes," he said, turning round, dropping her arm, and facing her as they reached the fireplace, "I saw a man in the pheasant-gap ; took him for a poacher ; intended giving him a fright with a blank charge, and fired the wrong barrel—a full charge of duck into him at five-and-twenty paces !" His face was deadly white, and his hands and legs shook so that the but-end of the gun rattled on the polished floor.

She retreated from him a moment, and then threw her arms around his neck, sobbing :

"My husband ! my husband !"

"Keep back from me, Agnes ; there may be blood on my hands."

"No, no, no!" she moaned, clinging more closely to him. "You did not intend to kill, you did not intend to hurt him. And he had no business there. Of course he must have been one of those horrid poachers."

"No poacher. After I fired I looked down under the smoke and saw—saw in the white light of the moon as he fell—saw his hand—saw the man throw up his hand as he fell, and it was no poacher's! I saw it as plainly as I see your face now. A white hand in the white moonlight. No poacher's hand—a white hand!" He shuddered, dropped his gun, which fell with a loud crash, and covered his face with his hands.

"Sit down. Sit down, my love; sit down and rest." She brought a chair and forced him into it, and fetched swiftly some wine and made him drink.


"I told them to carry him here, and go with all speed for Fields. Where's Emily? I hear them on the path. Where's Emily? It won't do to have her meet them. Call her, and let her be

here, at once. They will take him in the back way and lay him in one of the back rooms ; and this is most out of the way of that. Call Emily, Agnes."

Mrs. Crayford left in haste. She was anxious to shield her daughter from any rude shock. The girl was far too weak and too depressed to bear more sorrow, and coming so suddenly.

Mr. Crayford could hear the bearers as they passed the gravel-path in front of the dining-room window. He covered his face with his hand, and sank into a dull reverie. Thank heaven, things were not with him as they had been with his predecessor years ago in this place. Fate had denied him a son, but also denied him the awful pain endured by that unhappy father. It might be that this unlucky man was dead ; but at least the victim was a stranger to him and his.

So deeply was he occupied in his reflections that he did not notice the entrance of his wife and daughter. They approached softly without arousing him. They stood before him, looking at



his bent white head, his figure subdued by horror. To the daughter the mother had said no more than that, by a lamentable accident, the old man had wounded some unknown person, who was now being conveyed to the house. Five full minutes they stood thus, silent. Then the door opened, and a maid-servant came in. She too was white and full of fear. She hesitated a moment, and then advanced and spoke :

“The doctor has come, sir, and is with him. He is alive still.”

Without raising his head, the old man asked :

“In what room have they put him ?”

“In his own.”

“His own !” The old man flung down his hands in vague horror. “His own ! What do you mean ?”

He tottered to his feet, and stood with his back to the light, glaring with bloodshot eyes that shone terribly out of his blanched face.

The mother sank into a chair, breathing heavily. The pale daughter leaned one hand on the table

and turned her face—vacant for undefined misery—from the maid to her father.

“His own! What do you mean?”

“His own, sir. The small one behind the billiard-room.”

The old man paused, passed his hand slowly across his forehead, and said, with a weary attempt at a smile :

“Come, I thought it was my legs were going, but it is my head. What do you mean by saying: ‘His own behind the billiard-room’? That—that used to be Mr. James Russell’s. Have they put the wounded man in Mr. James Russell’s room?”

The maid started back with a wild scared look. She threw her apron over her head, and uttered a sob.

“What do you mean?”

“Oh sir?”

“Am I mad? Or do you hear me and refuse to answer?”

“Oh madam, take her away! Take Miss Emily away, madam!”

"Father, may I go to him? Jane, leave us. Father, may I go and see him? It can do no harm now. May I go, father? Ah mother, ask may I go and see James before he dies?"

"My head is gone. I must be mad. Agnes, what is all this? Why did you let Jane go before she told me?"

"Father, on my knees——"

"No, no, child; don't curse me! I did not know it was he. Get up."

"Oh father, may I go?"

"Get up, child, and don't curse me."

"No, no, no, my father; but he is dying. I did not know James was coming, indeed, I did not. He came only to see—only to see the house once more, I am sure, before he went away. May I go and see him now before he goes away—farther—farthest of all? May I, father? Oh dear mother, speak for me! I love him, and he is dying, and—and, oh my mother, speak for me! Make it your own case before—before you married."

"My child, my child! Agnes, speak to the child, and do as you think well; my head is gone. James Russell! Agnes, bid her go. Agnes, go with her, and bring me word."

It is a month later. A man and a woman are in the drawing-room of Dingle house. The man is pale and weak. He sits in an easy-chair, she by his side. His face is seamed and scarred, and under the sleeve of his right arm there is a swelling, as though he wore a stout bandage. The sunlight is bright abroad, and the face of the girl, although pale and a little careworn as with watching, is very bright too. In his left hand he holds her right. On the third finger of her left hand is a single ring—four rubies and one large diamond in a simple band. He plays with the ring, twisting it round her slender finger. After awhile he raises the hand, and first kisses it and then the ring.

"Emily, wasn't it good of your father to get this ring for me when he knew I could not go for it or write for it myself?"

"Yes, James."

"It was only last night he told me it was by my hand being white that he knew I was no poacher. Yet, Emily, although I did not come to steal his pheasants, as it happened, I came to steal away something infinitely better, my love."

Then follows a long pause. She leans her head upon his shoulder ; he still holds the hand, still playing with it.

"Isn't it strange, Emily? The former man who lived here fired and lost a son ; your father fired and lost a daughter."


"No—gained a son, James. Fired, and won you and your white hand."

"Fired, darling ; lost you, gave to me you and this, your own white hand for ever !"

FROM
THE CONDEMNED CELL


FROM
THE CONDEMNED CELL.

ON the 3rd of June, in the year 1846, I was born in Mary Street, Clonmel, County Tipperary. This is the summer of 1880. It is therefore thirty-four years since I entered the world. I am writing this in the Condemned Cell of Clonmel gaol, and I began this writing thirty-four hours before I shall be put out of life by the public hangman, Marwood. I have read Hugo's "Last Days of a Condemned;" I think that is the title of the book, but I am not sure. I have the most profound respect for the greatest French poet and romancist of all time; but I am writing from the Condemned Cell in my own person, not



making a psychological examination of the condition of an imaginary criminal. Anyone who is sceptical on the points in the following history has only to inquire at the places mentioned to find out how little imagination has to do with this history.

Among my earliest memories is one of uncommon terror. I had a pretty little nurse named Lizzie. She had for lover a soldier with a scar on his face. When she took me out in my basket-car she usually drew me to Millbrook, a large pond surrounded by a walk, situated on the Coleville Road, about a mile from the town. At Millbrook she usually met her lover. I was four or five years old at the time, and it became necessary to secure my silence when we came home. The path round the pond was continuous save at one point. Over the chamber containing the sluices which admitted or excluded the water from the aqueduct leading to the top of the overshot-wheel, the footway consisted of several loose planks.



The sluice-chamber beneath these planks measured three or four feet wide, by five or six feet deep. It was always full of clear, silent, slyly moving water. I can in no way convey the terror these unsecured planks, and that awful, silently restless body of water had for me. I can distinctly recollect believing that water possessed only one desire, that was to get someone down there, and drown him, drown him, drown him; press the breath out of him with its heavy, oily, sly might. By day and by night I dreamed of that hideous sluice-chamber and its rickety planks until it always seemed by my side ready to swallow me up, and smother the struggling life out of me.

I had told Lizzie my dread of this water; she told her lover. Their great fear was I should say at home she met this soldier. He was a man of resources, and he conceived and made a gag for my lips. He swore me to silence on the odious waters of that fell dam. As we were crossing it one day he seized me by the heels and lowered

me, head down, over the water until I could feel the cold pulse beat from the stream against my flushed face. I could see the dim green depths of the water beneath the planks. I could hear the splashing of the water over the wheel, and the groaning of the machinery. My soul was appalled. I shrieked out madly, and struggled to withdraw my face from the abominable surface.

"I'll drown you now, you young devil," he cried, in a low cruel voice. "I'll drown you now unless you swear to me by the water your face is against that you won't tell a soul you ever saw Lizzie with me. Swear that, or by the Lord I'll drown you now. I'll let go your heels and you shall drown. Will you swear?"

He plunged my face in the waters.


"Oh yes, yes! Oh, save me, Lizzie! Save me! I'll do anything you ask, only let me get back. Save me!"

Again he plunged me in. By this time I was half-dead with terror. He kept me immersed

half-a-minute, and when he placed me in the girl's arms I was insensible.

From that fatal day to this I have lived under the domination of water. De Quincey draws a fearful picture of the period at which water entered prominently into his opium dreams. It was only in the night he was troubled. Day and night I never got free of my dread.

Shortly after this Lizzie's soldier-lover left Clonmel, and I found myself relieved of one of my mental burdens. His going was not an unmixed good to me. Often when we had approached Millbrook my eyes eagerly explored the path and thicket to find if he was there. Now I knew he had been sent away to another town. When we drew near the pond no consideration diverted my mind from that sluice-chamber with its green, lucid, silent block of oily water. At that time I was a timid imaginative child, and obedient. In one thing I had defied Lizzie and her lover. Across those rickety planks I never would again go. Neither threats



nor entreaties would induce me, and they were afraid to use violence, lest I should die or have convulsions.

In my lifetime—and, as I have said, I am now four-and-thirty years of age—I have had as much to do with water as most landmen. I have been aboard more than a thousand ships. I have pulled an oar in most kinds of boats. I have been a little at sea. I have swum and sailed and rowed a good deal in land-locked water. I know the various aspects of the sea, winter and summer. I have had four narrow escapes of drowning. I love ships and the sea and the river. I was quite cool and collected when threatened by a watery death. I have no terror of the sea or the river. They fascinate me with a wholesome fascination. They arouse all my sympathies with the sublime and beautiful. When away from large masses of water I feel lonely and forlorn. But from sly, obscene, half-hidden, secret holes and chambers of water I have prayed God to deliver me. My prayers were not heard, and at last water of that kind is

destined to bring about my destruction, though not in the way I had ever feared, not in the way any man could ever dream. In a way almost too horrible to tell.


Although I have for some years earned my bread by writing, I am still exceedingly slow at composition. For instance, it has taken me four hours to get to this point. I have only now thirty hours. So I must move forward quickly with my story.

The Millbrook mills are on the County Waterford side of the river Suir. From the river-face of the mills a weir stretches into the Suir, and collects water for the undershot-wheel on the river-face. The wheel facing inward is overshot, and turned by a stream which rises in the first ridge of the Waterford mountains, standing up over Clonmel. This stream rises in the Ragwell Glen, and the first duty it does for man is to turn a mill-wheel at the end of the glen. That mill is by the road-ride, and of it I have nothing to say, for it never wrought upon my imagination. The water comes

blithely down the glen, is caught in a small shallow pond, and sent from the pond through a wooden aqueduct to the wheel. Here it plashes brightly over the small wheel and falls into the trough below. The water has not yet got greasy with long lying on stiff clay, nor grown green with spoil of banks, and growth of lazy progress.


As soon as the water has discharged its duty to the Ragwell mill it crosses under the road, and, when only a few yards below the bridge, is again caught in a pond and stored up for another over-shot-wheel. This second mill stands in from a lower road about a hundred paces. There is a gate of iron bars on the lower road, and through those bars one can see the wheel a hundred yards off. The wheel is narrow and enormously tall. It is the tallest wheel I have ever seen. It is the full height of the mill. Often in the twilight I have stood at the gate and looked at that gaunt spectral mill-wheel until I feared to walk away through the deserted green lanes. I have read Julian Hawthorne's wonderful story of "The Laughing Mill."

That had horrors enough, and in me found a most sympathetic reader. But this mill-wheel of mine never moved, never uttered a sound. It stood up in the twilight a gaunt skeleton of defunct activity or the crouching monster of some ambuscadoed outrage upon peace. When for half-an-hour I had peered through the gate at that wheel, I dreaded to stir lest the moment my back was turned that huge, stark wheel should tumble into motion, and whirling its long arms through the air, assail me with such sounds and screams as never before fell on human ears. The silence of that mill seemed a complement of the silence of that odious sluice-chamber below. For all the world I would not have seen that wheel move, for all the world I would not look into that sluice-chamber; and yet I have once seen that wheel move, I have once more looked into that sluice-chamber. Three months ago I looked into that sluice-chamber. When I raised my head I saw that wheel go round, and there and then I earned the doom under which I now lie.




Since last I spoke of time two hours have passed away. I am allowed to do almost as I please, and it has pleased me to sit up writing this account of my crime. It is four o'clock of a lovely summer morning. Those who will read this when it is published are still sleeping. I know this will be read. I know it will be published in London. Where I cannot tell, for I shall address it to a friend of mine, who, when I set out for this place, promised to do anything he could for me. Neither of us then thought I should have to put in his hands the account of how I, who had left London with my wife and little daughter Loo, came to be hanged in my native town, Clonmel, whither I had been ordered by a physician for change of air and scene.

My native town is lying all around me in the summer morning sunshine. Beyond my native town are the hills on which I built glorious castles in the air long ago. There I made love and war, had adventures at the Carnival of Venice, and led victorious hosts against the



foe. There I built Palaces of Art, and squandered millions annually. There I addressed multitudes and swayed them as a storm sways the forest. There I rose in my place in the House of Commons, at one blow shattered the Government, and was invited by the sovereign to form an administration. There I painted pictures men made pilgrimages to see. There I wrote poems which filled the whole world with my name. Now where are all my castles? What castle can a man build in the Condemned Cell? To men in my position but one castle is worth building. That one is, in my case, out of the question. I have no hope of reprieve, and a respite would be only cruelty. I have made up my mind to suffer for my act, and to give me longer life would be worse than unacceptable to me. I prefer death in a few hours to a life-long dwelling with my memories. If what I am now writing was in the nature of a petition containing a confession and an expression of sorrow, I should not forward it to London, but to Dublin Castle,



addressed to the Lord-Lieutenant. When they put me in the dock, and asked me to plead, I said "Guilty." Later, when they had proved the plea true, the judge asked me if I had anything to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon me, I addressed the court, and told all I have told above, all I have yet to tell here. I then added what bars this door finally against me until it opens upon the gallows. I said :

"In the eyes of the law, no doubt, my lord, my act was a crime, and it is equally true it was the crime of murder. I could not help what happened then. If I were again placed in the identical position, surrounded by the identical circumstances, even while your worship has his hand on the portfolio containing the black cap, I should act as I acted then."

I did not want penal servitude for life. I preferred the rope.

In passing sentence the judge said what I had urged as extenuating circumstances was too remote and visionary. If such a plea could be

raised in mitigation security to life would be at an end. Corsican vendetta could put forth no more untenable excuse. In conclusion his lordship expressed an opinion there was not the slightest reason to think I could avoid the severest penalty of the law.

I had spoken the truth in what I had said, at the same time I wished by saying that, to cut off my last chance of life.

It is now six o'clock. I have twenty-six hours yet to finish this. I shall finish it easily.

They have just asked me about my breakfast—when I should wish to have it, and what I should like.

"A cup of water from my child's hand at Millbrook the day after to-morrow," I answer.

They seem to be prepared for any reply, however wild. They do not look surprised, they do not look down. They simply move to the end of the cell, and sit down as they have sat during the night.

To resume where I left off in the direct line of events :

The youthful experiences of which I have spoken above were not crowded into a small compass of time. They were extended over a period of years. But my first morbid horror arose the day that soldier with the scar on his face held me down upon those accursed waters. My terror of that silent chamber was one of slow development, one that grew year by year.

In 1861 I went to Limerick to school. I was then a shy backward boy, painfully ashamed of my backwardness. You can read in the immortal book of the greatest of humorists who employed the English language, and of whom I have the honour to be a fellow-townsmen, that at the time of the memorable siege of Limerick the country all round that city was no better than a bog, and, because of its dampness, made siege operations almost impossible. My memory of the land around Limerick in 1861 is that Corporal Trim's description would then have applied also. I

resided altogether about a year and a half at Limerick. During the time I lived at Corbally, and had to walk every day almost from end to end of the city. I crossed water twice going and twice coming back from school, and yet have no depressing memory of Limerick water, except one, and that not a very vivid or enthralling one. When I first saw the long sleek weir at Corbally I was filled with dismay and foreboding. But gradually I grew accustomed to the sight of that round, dark, rolling, polished shaft of water lying across the river. The boiling foam beneath it cheered and consoled me. But if that glittering arc of silent water had vanished into some sightless chasm I should not have been able to endure the spectacle.

Let me pause here for one moment to point out to the reader two or three things he must keep in mind. First, that I was an imaginative timid boy, not afraid of what was, but dreading with all my soul what might be, or, which is all the same, what I thought might be. Thus,


physical danger exhilarated me, the hint of a mystery drove me into ecstasies of apprehension. Second, that when I grew to be a man I made use of that imagination as a writer, and so developed it, and acquired skill in the direction of it. And third, that I am not saying all these thoughts and sensations and imaginings stood out in my childhood, youth, or adolescence to me then as they do now in the maturity of manhood, when I have been at great pains to analyse them. I do not know that in my present strait I may not say anything I think expedient, or likely to help the reader. There will, I assume, be no want of modesty or taste in telling, say, that in so far as I have had to do with literature I have made psychology the chief pursuit of my pen. I am inclined to believe the exercise of inquiry of that kind through many years has given me facility in this most intimate of all investigations. An account of inner life would be to the ordinary man a difficult thing to give. I give it with readiness and pleasure. While I am writing this I am,

by the exercise of a faculty long used by me in the open world, distracted from contemplating the ghastly end of my career. It is the desire of most men to die in harness. This is more than dying in harness. This is being shot down in harness and while leading the forlorn hope. I trust there is no offence to the reader in this candour. There are occasions on which I would tell a lie without a moment's hesitation ; but in all ordinary matters of life, and in one exceptional matter of death, I have been straightforward. When in ordinary matters I believed myself to be wrong I have never shirked the responsibility or unpleasantness of my position. When I dipped my hands in blood I waited deliberately and gave myself up.

From Limerick I returned to Clonmel, where I now am. I had always had a great interest in painting. Although I spent four years under masters, and devoted much of my time to drawing, I never could learn. I think I had a good robust sense of colour. My desire was to be a landscape painter. At this time I made up for the back-

wardness of my childhood. Half the day I spent among the hills or by the river, studying clouds and trees, and light and shade, and the wonderful panoplies of colour in which the sunsets clad the Galtees and Slieve-na-mon. By night I read what books I could find or borrow. I pursued literature and art with headlong passion. I became drunk on beauty. My eyes opened upon the sublime. I lived a silent, quiet, retired life with the hills, and the lights and shadows of the hills, and the thunders and torrents of the hills, and the immortal gods genius had created for my familiars and my friends.

But when these splendours left me, when my mind awoke from reverie, and had no time to propose an image to my mental eye, I saw that loathsome sluice-chamber with greasy water. The first piece of verse I wrote was a description of what the moon revealed at the bottom of the sea. The first picture I painted was the reflection of the sad weird green of sunset upon the waters of a gloomy mountain tarn.




Again they ask me what will I eat and drink.

"I want only a cup of cold water from the hand of my child at Millbrook the day after to-morrow. Until I get that, until then I shall neither eat nor drink."

I am tired now, and will rest awhile.


It was not destined I should become a painter. In January, 1864, I went to reside at Waterford. It had then been determined to try if a business man could be made of me. In Waterford I grew to manhood. My memories of Clonmel are those merely of childhood, and of youth passed in comparative solitude, and in worldly circumstances much inferior to those of my childhood. In youth the friends I made were the friends of the "eternal boy," "earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood," for though the ocean is thirty miles from the town you can see it from the hills, and I had made many a pilgrimage to it at Tramore from the inland plains of Tipperary. In Waterford I formed the friendships of my early manhood. I doubt if the friends of any other time ever come so close as those we



confide in when ambition and love and hope begin to see ways to ends. It was in Waterford I made the friendships which are still dearest and closest to my heart. If the five friends who knew me there as a lad and young man come across this they will read it. Stop! only four of them can ever come across it on earth. In the Hereafter I may meet the fifth to-morrow. He died a year ago, the victim of a cruel accident. I die to-morrow, the victim of damnable fate, the prey of the common hangman, who will leave Clonmel to-morrow evening the richer of my death by the clothes I wear, and a ten-pound note. He has already arrived, and is now reaving the rope through the block for me.

Of these five most intimate friends I made in Waterford one is dead, two are in the present Parliament, one has a mill for crushing gold-quartz in Queensland, and one is still in Waterford. I, the sixth, am here in Clonmel gaol awaiting execution. In Waterford I became acquainted with ships. In *The Waterford Citizen*, of October,

1864, I published my first crude effort at prose. In Waterford I earned the first shilling I received for verse ; in Waterford I learned to manage a boat ; in Waterford I first acquired a vote ; in Waterford I first tasted tobacco ; in Waterford I first read " Monte Christo "—and on each of these I look as an important event in my life. In Waterford I had my first vision. I have had several of these visions, but the first was the most vivid and disquieting. One night, as I lay awake in the dark, suddenly a portion of the room became illumined. The space extended to much more than the superficial area of the room, each side being about forty feet. The light increased, and then I could see the whole space was a hole or shaft in the ground about forty feet square, and surrounded by a huge balustrade, and crossed by large beams of wood. All these beams were covered with a soft fringe of green moss, and from this fringe of moss the light issued in a lambent glow. Water gathered in drops on the tags of this luminous moss, quivered there awhile, and then fell like




incandescent emeralds into the chasm below. I would not, if I could, have looked down into that chasm for all the world. This vision vanished upon my opening my eyes, and came back upon my closing them. It lasted fully five minutes, and during that time I caused it to vanish and return several times. Beyond the power of making it come or go, I had none over it.

Although I lived several years in Waterford, and had much to do with ships and boats, I had no other unpleasant experience of the class I describe but one. At that time I gave my mind up a good deal to transcendentalism. Zimmermann was one of my favourite companions in Solitude. I loved best to unmoor a boat at half-flood-tide, sit reading or dreaming in the stern, and let the boat drift up the river.

One sultry evening I found myself by twilight on the Kilkenny shore a little below Kilmacow pill. The boat drifted very slowly. The tide was nearly spent. It would not run up more than a quarter of an hour. Suddenly I saw an

opening in the bank I had never noticed before. It was narrow, and on each side of it rose tall osiers. It fascinated my imagination. "I will enter," I thought, "this Venice of reeds and leaves"

Without rising I sculled slowly up the narrow way beneath the two walls of silent stalks. The water beneath was as black as ink ; the place as silent as a vault. The air was thick and luscious with the smell of many flowers. An incommunicable melancholy fell upon me as I glided through the hushed, heavy dusk. The way expanded, and I entered an open space, a square as well as I could make out in the twilight. For any consideration I would not have put foot on that moist lush shore, there among the tangled roots of the reeds. I knew if I did something would seize my foot, something ten thousand times more hideous than the devil-fish. I knew the moment that thing touched me I should be numbed, paralysed like one a tiger has caught and shaken. I knew that awful creature would drag me slowly




out of the boat in among those accursed reeds, and there slay me with terror, not with claws or teeth. What foul fate had drawn me in here? Let me get away! Let me get away stealthily and at once. There could not be more than two feet of water here. Let me pole the boat out with the oar. It would be reassuring to feel the substantial bottom of this hateful lake.

I stood up slowly in the stern, lifted the oar out of the scull-hole, and thrust it slowly downward close by the counter. With a start of horror I drew in the oar, and stood still. The oar was eight feet long; it had gone down six feet in the water, and had touched no bottom! What unmeasured depths of this dull, sodden, motionless water beneath the half-inch plank that kept me from its slimy bottom! Why it was no better than a huge sluice-chamber! Intolerable, suffocating thought.

I sat down in the boat. A cold perspiration broke out all over me. I felt as though I were going to faint. Since the day that soldier with

the scar on his face held me head downwards over the sluice-chamber of Millbrook pond, I had never felt so paralysed, so terrified, so like to die. It was several minutes before I could collect myself sufficiently to regain the river by sculling. When at last I found myself out on the broad fresh wholesome familiar river, I could not repress a cry of joy, and had a mad desire to jump overboard.

Although, as I have said, I spent many years in Waterford, this was the only occasion upon which I felt anything like that old terror. From Waterford I went to Dublin in the year 1870, and from that time to this I have been permanently connected with journalism and literature. I may be very brief with my Dublin experiences. So far as the purposes of this history are concerned it was a blank, save at two points. First, for a good portion of my time there, that is to say from 1870 to 1874 (in the latter year I left Dublin for London), I lived in Rathgar, beyond the Southern canal, and the bridge by which I crossed



to and from town was the Portobello one, into the lock of which an omnibus had once fallen. At the time the lock was empty, but the unlucky lock-keepers shut the lower gate and opened the sluices in the belief the omnibus would float. The result was all the people in the vehicle were drowned. Often I stood there for hours watching that lock emptied and filled, and realising the appalling sensation of those in the ill-starred omnibus when they heard the first plunge of the green water from the sluice-gate above them. The second point of importance is that here I was married.

It is now two o'clock in the afternoon. I have eighteen hours to live. At six o'clock this evening the wife I married in Dublin is coming to bid me farewell. She is not bringing Loo, our darling little golden-haired, blue-eyed Loo, who was the apple of my eye, the idol of my love.

Loo was five when she died. She died in

Clonmel just three months ago. I cannot tell how much I loved that child. I would have died a thousand times for her sweet sake. It would be a profanation to speak of her little ways, her loving wiles, her endearing arts, her grave sweet simple sayings, her fair youthfulness, her fresh beauty, her lovingness, her white-veined temple, her perfect limbs—I must not let loose my feelings, or I shall never make an end of this. I am now growing a very old man. My wife is not bringing the child with her, for my little beauty, my pride, my joy, my hope, is dead. They buried her in St. Mary's churchyard, the churchyard I played in as a boy, the churchyard where I heard the burial service read a hundred times, where I heard the three volleys over the soldier's grave, where I toyed with skulls and thigh-bones, and where for years old Barney Black, the sexton, was the terror of my young life.

I did not see my child's funeral, I did not see my child's grave. But as I sit here I can see my darling in her white shroud under the chancel-

wall. I can see her pretty little hands folded on her heart. Oh my white rose, lily of my heart, lily baby child! To think you died, died, and your death lies at my door! Pale little baby child, forgive your accursed father. Had your death come about through any other man's fault I should have struggled hard for life; but with such a scene in my memory, such a crime upon my soul, life here would be worse than the worst hereafter. No, not even for thy mother's sake, darling baby, can I live. To-morrow they will throw this hateful body in quicklime, fit resting-place for such a father.

But I grow old apace. Already I have one foot in the grave, and the public hangman is pushing in the other. I shall die gladly. My wife—well, there, I must not think of that. Despite our seven years of marriage we are like lovers still. She is coming to me at six this afternoon to bid me good-bye. I must finish this before she comes. When I have kissed her the last time I shall speak to no one on earth again.

I shall go to the grave with that kiss of forgiveness and love. Kiss my wife for the last time! I remember when I kissed her first. From kiss to kiss what a history! What a glory! What a crime!

It is now four in the afternoon. My life is worth no more than sixteen hours' purchase. I die to-morrow morning at eight o'clock.

There is no necessity for me to dwell on my life in London. I felt the cruel stings of fortune and the kindly touch of helping hands. London has no place in the narrative of my life from its final standpoint except that early in the year 1880 I fell into a low nervous condition, and was ordered change of air, and if possible to go back to my native town. Overwork had begun to tell on me. Visions thickened upon me in the dark, and the medical opinion was that serious danger might be apprehended if I did not get away from London at once. In my dreams my memory of that sluice-chamber pursued me, and the doctors

said the best way to cure myself was to go back to the old town, and beat down these visions by familiarity with the place, the ghost of which haunted me.

In the middle of March I left London, taking with me my wife and child. We stayed a few days in Dublin with friends, and then came on to Clonmel, through Nenagh, where also we had friends. Towards the end of March we found ourselves comfortably settled at Hearne's Hotel, Clonmel, with what used fourteen years ago to be called the "New" National Bank in front.

The day I arrived in Clonmel I felt no improvement. On the contrary, a deeper depression came upon me than I had ever felt before. I walked through streets, and found I did not know the names over half the shops. I did not meet a soul whose face I recognised, with whom I could exchange a word. That night I scarcely slept an hour. Towards morning I dozed and dreamed of that sluice-chamber more terribly than ever. I thought I was down at the bottom of it, and

that I could not move. I was suffocated by the weight of the appalling water on my chest, not the stoppage of my breath, by closing the wind-pipe as in ordinary cases of drowning. I awoke in a cold perspiration, sprang out of bed, and swore to endure this terrible tyranny no longer. I determined to go to Millbrook that hour and try to conquer this misery once and for all.

I went over the new bridge, and along the Coleville Road. I walked down the long familiar avenue. I went through the gateway leading to the pond. With resolute step I trod the gravel-path, and walked without pausing to the loose boards across the sluice-chamber. I looked into it. I laughed and raised my eyes. There far away above me through the skeletons of the trees stood the old gaunt mill-wheel, which had so terrified my youthful fancy. I laughed again. The ghost had been laid. That slowly moving block of greasy green water had no more terror for me than the white swans sailing about on the bosom of the pretty pond. What a blessed thing

to be delivered after nine-and-twenty years from the odious spirit of this place !

Some men approached. For a moment my eye rested carelessly on them. Suddenly I felt a blind rage rise up in me, and singling out one who, although he wore no longer a red jacket, I recognised instantly notwithstanding the years, I seized him by the throat and said :

“Nine-and-twenty years ago, you scoundrel, you held me, face down, over that water, and by heaven, I have more than half a mind to fling you in there, and let you drown like a rat in a well.”

He was a much more powerful man than I, notwithstanding the differences of our ages, but at the moment I had the strength of ten. At last I flung him from me, and turned away saying : “ You may go now, but if I find you here again I’ll drown you as I would a cur.”

At that moment I felt I should have been justified in almost taking his life. Through his act of twenty-nine years ago I had suffered worse pain than that of death.

That night I enjoyed a most refreshing sleep full of pleasant dreams. I thought instead of being in Clonmel we were all in Venice, and were rowed all day long through the romantic river-streets. Not once did I dream of that sluice-chamber.

Next morning I awoke invigorated and refreshed. Such awaking I had not enjoyed for a long time. The spell had been broken yesterday as I stood on those loose planks. I was cured for ever. I should remain here a little while to pick up a stock of health, and then go back to London with my wife and child.

Owing to the stupidity of a railway porter at the Kingsbridge terminus one of our cases had been sent to Cork, and we wanted some of the things in that case. There was nothing for it but to buy substitutes for what we had lost. My wife undertook to make the purchases, and the day being fine, I asked our little Loo to come with me for a walk.

I led the child by the hand past the courthouse, past the brewery, and out on the quay. We

chatted as we went. I showed her a place once owned by her great-grandfather. I showed her where I had gone to school. I pointed out the house in which her grandfather had lived. I showed her the New-bridge. We ascended the steps of the New-bridge. I showed her the parapet along which we used to run as boys. I showed her the Orchard, the way to the Ragwell Road. And then we turned to the left.

I asked my darling if she felt tired, and she said: "Oh no. Take me a long way." I little knew the long way I was then taking her.

We kept to the left. I pointed out the old familiar places, and told her how we should bring mother to see all the sights here and there; the lakes up in the hills, and Bagwell's at Marlfield, Osborne's down the river, the Rock of Cashel across the great Tipperary plain.

Was my little love tired?

"Oh no. Let us go on. What place is that down there, father?"

"You have often heard me speak of it. Let us

go in and walk round the pond. Then it will be time to go back to mother."

We passed down the avenue. As long as I lived no servant should ever take my child here. Just fancy terrifying my darling little Loo! No monster so foul could live.

Here was the gate, and it was open. I held her hand firmly as we entered. We looked at the swans. I told her I often came here with my nurse when I was young. We approached the sluice-chamber. I saw the water of the pond slowly gathering onward towards the entrance. My mind went back to that day nine-and-twenty years ago, and the odious cruelty of that man. The planks were still loose. In order to prevent any chance of accident I took my child in my arms to carry her across. I stood on the middle of the inward plank, and looked down, holding my child in front of me. As my eyes caught once more the green greasy depths, I felt a sudden change come over me. I had my child five years old in my arms. I was five years

old when my terror was born. Through my child the terrors born of the water rushed in upon me a thousand fold. My mind was once more the mind of a child of five with the larger sympathy of a man to feel for the child. I shivered. I felt deadly cold. I looked up. The great, gaunt, hideous mill above me was whirling its arms aloft! My arms relaxed. My child slipped from my arms, fell into the water and was slowly carried by the current into the sluice-chamber.

I saw her drift beneath the surface of the water into that hideous sluice-chamber. I knelt down and looked under the planks. I saw her turned slowly quietly by the water. Then I raised my head, and seized the planks, and strove to tear them up, shrieking for help all the while. I looked down. She rose to the surface. She knew I was a good swimmer. She was only a few feet from me. She stretched out her pretty little hands to me. Her sweet

blue eyes were fixed on mine. She cried out: "Father, father, father, can't you save me?"

- No, I could not. If hell pursued me, and the way to heaven lay through that water I could not jump in.

I raised my head and shrieked again. I looked into the sluice-chamber once more. I saw her sink, sink down and turn over, her sweet hands still held out to me for help—the appealing look still upon her upturned face. Down she sank through the silent water as gently as the petal of a white rose shed upon a summer calm.

Again I shrieked for help. Perhaps she was not yet dead, my little Loo down there. Loo! Loo!

I heard footsteps. Someone drew near. I was blinded and could not see. I cried: "Quick, quick, my child! In there!"

There was a splash. Water got into my eyes, and I could not see for half-a-minute. When I regained my sight a man was holding up with

one hand my child to me, while he hung to the planks with the other. I took the baby, and looked at her.

"She's dead!" I said.

"Yes," he answered. "You coward, why did you not jump in? Help me. The current is drawing me in. Give me your hand."

I looked down. I stretched out my hand, and suddenly drew it back. I looked at my child again. Dead beyond all doubt. I saw the face rising up out of the water. I looked at the scar upon it. I looked once more at my dead child. Then I went over, threw myself flat on the loose planks, seized that man by the hair, and said: "You made me a coward. You are the cause of my child's death. Now you shall die for what you did to me nine-and-twenty years ago, for what through that and through me you have done to-day."

I thrust him down, held him under the water till he ceased to struggle, then let him go. I got up and sat by the body of my child until

they came, and I told them all as I tell you now.

It is half-past five now. In half-an-hour I have to say good-bye to my wife, to the mother of little Loo. I want that half-hour for rest. I will now stop. Good-bye to all my dear friends.

THE
RESPECTABLE SEAFARING
MAN

THE
RESPECTABLE SEAFARING
MAN.

CAPTAIN PAUL always spoke of himself as a respectable seafaring man. Those who knew him called him Captain Paul, and described him as the respectable seafaring man. But no one speaks so seriously of any other man as of himself, and when Captain Paul's friends described him as the respectable seafaring man, they were not half so grave as the captain himself when he uttered the words. It should not, however, be inferred that the good captain was not a respectable seafaring man. His character was above suspicion, and he had from boyhood been brought up to

the sea. His brother-skippers, less nice in etiquette and language, called themselves captains simply. But, by legal right, it was only those who commanded ships belonging to the Navy had any claim to the title. Captain Paul was known officially as a master-mariner. He had little affection for this designation. It grated harshly on his ears; it seemed to imply a question of ability and an inferiority of social distinction.

When Captain Paul entered into particulars of his position, he was wont to describe himself as in a perpetual hand-to-hand fight with the wolf at the threshold. He, and his wife, and his children were always models of cleanliness and of curious persistent attempts to disguise repairs in outer garments. He explained his patches by asking what was the good of wearing decent broadcloth among rusty chains, tarry ropes, and oily cabin-tables.

On the Sabbath he took a sober delight in showing the good people of the city that his figure suited finery. His coat on that day was

black and whole, and his waistcoat of heavy woollen material, rich in device, and of a full liver colour. But, upon that day, as upon every other while ashore, his chief ornament was a cylindrical hat of surprising stature.

This hat, above all other things, made his appearance noteworthy. The captain's figure was considerably below the medium in height; with his hat he looked like a diminutive juggler balancing a black pillar on his head. Where this hat had been procured no one could tell. Another like it had never been seen. Inquiries addressed to him about his hat he received blandly. But no satisfactory account of it had ever been obtained. The one thing about the hat more surprising than its great height was the length of time he had worn it. Some said they remembered it twelve, others fifteen years.

The hat had not been without its adventures and vicissitudes. Wags had set upon it and ill-treated it. Plots had been laid for its destruction.

Oil had been poured into it, and soap rubbed on it against the nap. It had been tacked down to a counter, in the hope that, when he laid hold of it, the crown might come away from the sides. It had been driven over his eyes at night, and flung under the hoofs of horses. It had swum for hours in the river. A mast-top had been crowned with it, and, by way of getting it down, a bullet had been sent through it from the deck. It had been sat upon, and tramped on, and thrown on the fire, and kicked through the mud. But in each case, after a temporary absence, it reappeared, looking younger and glossier, like a Faust of hats, until the wags gave up their plottings and bad usage, and, in the end, began to regard it with superstitious reverence.

Captain Paul's bad fortune was equalled only by his good temper. He had left a brig on the rocks of the Azores, and a barque in the Straits of Terra del Fuego. A fine schooner had leaped upon the rocks of Caernarvon Bay, and quivered to death beneath his feet. He

had been owner of these three vessels. Then he had to go master for other owners, and his luck grew no better—if possible it became worse. Sailors declared that out of the fairest summer day Captain Paul could compel a storm, and call up from unfathomable depths of ocean jagged-toothed ridges of rocks. No voyage went over without disaster of some kind visiting the ship of which he was master. Now it was a mainmast lost in the Bay of Biscay when deep-laden with copper ore. Now a cargo of Russian corn shifted off Malta. Now a leak five days out from Riga with hemp. Now a fire aboard with ice from Drobach. Now a touch upon the ground at Barmouth. It had happened over and over again that members of his crew were lost. Upon two occasions not a soul but the captain survived to tell the story of the wreck.

In time, to all the other difficulties into which his misfortunes betrayed him, was added the unwillingness of seamen to ship in vessels he commanded. If it became known that Captain Paul


had been appointed to such and such a vessel, a crew could hardly be procured for her in the city, and men had to be sought at distant ports whither his fame had not travelled.

On account of all his misfortunes and ill-luck he grew superstitious. He leant towards fatalism, and believed in ghosts. He would refuse to ship in no vessel, no matter how rotten the hull or decayed the gear. He wanted, he said, to eat bread and cheese, and get bread and cheese for his family, and he didn't think the waters of the sea were going to play him any tricks at this time of his life. He could not believe that water was to be his fate. It had had plenty of first-rate chances, and if water was to be his fate, why didn't it take one of them? It possessed no terror for him. To a certain extent he despised it. He had so often triumphed over it in his own person, and as it was the only thing he had ever triumphed over, he not unnaturally held it in low esteem.

But though he despised the sea on his own account, it made him nervous on account of others.

Remarks dropped half in jest had eaten into his mind. He became sensitive on the subject of all those men who had lost their lives while sailing with him. If he could follow the bent of his impulse he would stay at home, take a garden, grow sweet thyme and marigolds for the markets. But then no man beginning gardening at his time of life could keep a family out of sweet thyme and marigolds. His profession was the sea, and he knew nothing of any other. He would gladly have set up a marine-store, but the difficulty of capital was not to be overcome. Under the pressure of his fancied responsibility he grew anxious, and wasted into a condition of weak tremulous apprehension.

Noises in the night affrighted him. Shadows he conjured into the shapes of those who were gone. He slept with his head covered, and put wool into his ears on deck after dark. The lapping of the water at the bow seemed voices wailing for help. Often in the mysterious night, while the vessel stalked onward without sound,



he had crept over the bows to see if some poor half-spent soul was not clinging to the loose end of a rope. The mutter of his children seemed the whispers of dead men's children reproving and cursing him. He bitterly asked himself in extenuation, was he to allow his own children to starve when he could work, and there was work to be done?

As the catalogue of his misfortunes lengthened with years he found greater difficulty in obtaining employment. Shipowners grew shy of him, and feared to trust their property in his charge. They imported masters from other ports rather than have Paul. Fate was dead against him. Men would not engage if he were to be skipper, and owners would not employ him as long as they could find any tolerable substitute.

As the winter with which this story is concerned drew to its darkest depth, the respectable seafaring man entered the narrowest ways he had known. For months he had been idle, and although he abated no whit of his claim to be

considered a respectable seafaring man, he had been seen on the Sabbath without his famous hat! Those who lived near him could tell, and did tell with tender regret, that poor Mrs. Paul was managing without her china, and her eight-day clock, and her silk gown, of which last she had been so proud, for he had brought it from foreign parts. Indeed, although the neighbours did not say it—they were reticent out of sorrow—most of Captain Paul's furniture was gone, and his little children were now kept permanently in the back of his six-roomed house; for they were not, as the neighbours put it, softening the facts, as tidy as they used to be.

Towards the close of a November evening in this dead waste and mid-winter of Captain Paul's dereliction, he sat sadly smoking a pipe in the office of James the shipbroker. Of late the shipbrokers had got tired of him; he took up room in their offices, and was of no profit. They left off bidding him the time of day, and gradually hints fell that the offices were small, and could

accommodate none but those who had business to do.

But where could the unhappy man turn? Though he was without work, as long as he sat with master-mariners, in the midst of the old sea-talk, he was holding up his head among his peers.

On this particular night he could not bear to go home and look at his half-clad little ones. He preferred staying out until they were—asleep. He could not walk about, for, if the truth must be told, he had eaten nothing that day, and was not able to stand very firmly on his feet. The tobacco he smoked had been given to him by a chance acquaintance on the grounds of its excellence, because the servants of the Government had never set eyes on it.

This respectable seafaring man was in very low water indeed, and he was beginning to wonder whether he should die of starvation, or hold out yet another day. He could not beg, and there was absolutely nothing more at home to pawn.

As he sat, smoking and thinking, he wore neither waistcoat nor shirt. That morning he had procured a short meal for his wife and children by leaving his shirt and waistcoat with the rest. He had told his wife, for there was a kind of foolish bragging spirit in him, that he was to spend the evening with the captain of a foreign barque. The barque really existed, but the engagement was fiction.

The tobacco happened to be excellent and the fire warm. No noise disturbed the office save the scratch of pens, and an occasional word passing from one clerk to his fellow.

The fire was warm and the tobacco good, and the respectable seafaring man was very weak ; so the fire and the tobacco overcame him, and he fell fast asleep.


He dreamed of the good old times, when he and his family had roast beef and bacon on Sunday ; of the time when the very brine of his harness-casks would nourish, it was so ripe and juicy. Anon, it was early morning, early summer

morning, and they were in sight of home, and the ship's boy brought him a cup of strong rich-smelling coffee, and biscuit covered all over with butter. Then it was night off a dangerous coast; he stood forward of the galley, and could smell the delicious odour of soup which the cook was making for his supper.

This respectable seafaring man was experiencing a starving man's dream. He had eaten nothing that day. And now that he is asleep and cannot hear it, the whole truth may be told—he had eaten nothing the day before.

While Captain Paul sat dreaming by the fire, Matthew entered the office.

Matthew owned a number of crazy old vessels, which he sent out upon all kinds of dangerous and uncertain voyages. He was noted all through the city for his stinginess, and the insufficient wages he paid. He never could retain in his service men able to earn under any other masters. Only the aged, the deformed, and the unfortunate accepted berths aboard his vessels.



Matthew walked with a quick step behind the little counter, and going up to the high stool upon which James the shipbroker sat, asked :

"Have you the papers of the *Star of the Sea* all ready?"

"Yes," answered James; "here they are. Do you intend giving them yourself to the captain?"

"Confound the captain?" cried Matthew angrily. "He's done a nice thing! Refused to go at the last moment! But I'll see what the law can do with the blackguard."

"Awkward. That's very awkward."

"Infernally awkward. Particularly as those meddlesome sanitary scoundrels have served a notice that if the vessel does not leave the river to-morrow's tide they'll have her towed into the bay at my expense and risk."

"I'm told the bones are very bad—green and fat—and that her hatches are smoking like a steamer?"

"They're not very good. But we've got the two hatches off. What more can we do? The

wind isn't fair, and I've no one to go in her. Do you think those sanitary fools are in earnest?"

"As sure as you are standing there. You see, there's a good deal of fever in the city, and every one declares the bones are frightful. People on the quay can hardly breathe, they say."

"I wish, James, you could get someone for her. I wouldn't mind giving a gratuity above the wages. We ought to be able to get a good man if that were known."

"Bones are always objected to. Most of the skippers I know wouldn't take double wages and sail shipmates with them."

"Well, you see, she's only about half full this time. A man can't pay wages and port-charges and victual a ship these times, unless he's prepared to put anything that's going into her. Can't you think of anyone?"

"Stop!" cried the shipbroker suddenly. "There's Paul. He's asleep at the fire. Would he do?"

"I suppose we must have him if there's no one

else. Yes. Wake him. I'm the most unlucky man alive."

James went over to the respectable seafaring man, caught him by the shoulder, and shook him, saying :

"Captain Paul! Captain Paul! Rouse up. Will you take the *Star of the Sea* to Plymouth with bones?"

Half-awake, Paul staggered to his feet. His faculties were benumbed, and he imperfectly appreciated what had been said. The words seemed part of his vision, and he gasped out :

"Bones—yes, bones! Anything! I'll eat anything—only for God's sake be quick—I'm starving."

The two men started back in horror. There was no mistaking the man's words, and the truth of what he said was warranted by his pale face and blue lips.

"Here, Tom," cried the shipbroker, turning hastily to the office-messenger, "run out for

a glass of brandy and some biscuits. D'ye hear!"

The man went in sympathetic haste. For although everyone laughed at the respectable seafaring man, anyone that knew him would grieve to see him thus.

Before the starving man had fully recovered from his heavy sleep the brandy and biscuits came. Paul vainly endeavoured to recover the admission contained in his words; but he was visibly faint; there could be no mistaking the symptoms of his disease. The heart of James, the shipbroker, was deeply moved, and after Paul and Matthew had arranged matters, he put gold into Paul's hand, saying:

· "You'll want to get' some things before you go. It is necessary you should be aboard to-morrow at noon. You can pay me back at the end of the voyage. Here are the papers."

The brandy and the biscuits, together with the good news, made Captain Paul feel quite hearty and buoyant. He went out and bought tender,

juicy steaks, and aromatic tea, and sparkling sugar, and snow-white bread, and fresh yellow butter, smelling of honeysuckle ; and, so freighted, turned towards home.

The whole family held a revel that night. When the children were gone away, he turned to his wife, and said :

“Who knows, Ellen, but I may get on with old Matthew and please him, and he may leave me the *Star of the Sea* for good?”

“Who knows?” she answered, with an encouraging smile.

Early enough next morning he was aboard the *Star of the Sea*. She was a dilapidated old coasting vessel, long lost to all sense of decency, and quite satisfied to live on any terms. Her decks trembled when a foot crossed them. Her topsides gaped. Her covering-board was eaten through here and there. Her old masts and spars were warped and spliced, and when her sails were loosed they hung in ragged tatters. Even now, although lightly laden, and lying in

smooth water, the pumps had to be looked to every two hours. There was no crazier craft afloat. Add to this the crowning fact that she was laden with the most objectionable cargo ever put on board ship. One could scarcely breathe on her decks. A mile down to leeward the people called out against the suffocating fumes.

Notwithstanding all her drawbacks, Captain Paul never put his foot aboard a vessel with a more grateful heart. His wife should draw his wages while he was away. His children could not be hungry for a month or two. He certainly did feel a little pang when he reflected that the cabin of a bone vessel was hardly a fit place for a respectable seafaring man—but then the children and his poor wife! So he issued his orders to the five men in as brisk a voice as had ever passed his lips.

That evening, obedient to the instructions of the sanitary officers, the vessel dropped down the river, and let go her anchor in the bay,

half-a-mile from the leeward shore. Still the weather was not fair. She had been ordered to lie here, as no people lived down in the wind. Nothing particular occurred that day. There was no reason why Captain Paul should not be satisfied with his crew. It is true they had grumbled a little when they saw "unlucky Paul" was to be master ; but after awhile, as soon as they had dined, all unpleasantness disappeared from their manner.

The short November day soon came to an end, and heavy darkness fell upon the waters of the bay. There was not exactly a fog, but the air was full of moisture. The *Star of the Sea* rocked sleepily to and fro. Except the anchor watch, which consisted of one man, the crew had gone below. The one man was forward. Captain Paul thought he would see that all was right in the hold before he turned in for the night. So, having lighted a lantern and wound his muffler around his mouth, he thrust a ladder down the main hatch, and descended.

The hold was dim with noxious vapours, and horrid with creeping things. He shuddered as the bones slipped beneath his feet. They had been beaten flat with huge mallets ; but still, as he trod on them, they glided and glided, like lithe snakes. He was obliged to stoop almost double as he moved, for the unclean cargo reached within four feet of the deck. As he stood at the pump-case, selecting where they should lay the few yards of spare sails, and oilcloth, and chains, to keep the cargo from shifting, he started violently, and staggered back against the mast.

There was no mistaking it. Between the smashed ribs of a horse and the green-yellow head of a cow, the thing shone bare and startingly white. He summoned courage enough to swing the lantern over the horrible object. After that, there could be no excuse for doubt. The lower jawbone of a man, with all the teeth in it, lay before him.

With a cry of terror he leaped to the ladder,

mounted it hastily, and, tripping over the top round, fell almost fainting to the deck.

He struggled to his feet, staggered against the bulwark, and gasped for air.

What brought human bones in his cargo?

Privation had made him weak, and had unstrung his nerves.

"What brings human bones in *my* cargo? Human bones! It's horrible beyond bearing! In any other man's cargo they would not be half so bad. No, not half so bad; for when I think of all the poor fellows who perished near me—— Ugh! Human bones! I had better starve than live for this!"

His memory and imagination wrought until his condition became intolerable. He magnified what he had seen in the hold; he could not persuade himself but that half the cargo consisted of human bones. His old superstitious feeling came over him with double force and disturbed his reason. His fancy showed him, lying below, a hideous gathering of skeletons, with empty

eye-sockets, in whose vacant depths burned revengeful light. He had often scrupled bringing bad luck a-shipboard; now, all those who had fallen out of existence under his sway had come back, and were beneath the deck. Oh it was maddening!

He went to the water-cask, and having filled the dipper, dashed the water over his face. This steadied him a little.

After all, it had been only one bone. Only one. But then the cargo was deep down in the vessel, and no more than the surface could be seen. How could he tell but that there were thousands of bones, human bones, scattered through the others. When he had seen one exposed, the chance, the certainty was that there were more—a great deal more—a hundred—a thousand.

Then his imagination took fire again.

Nothing was more reasonable than to suppose a hundred complete skeletons huddled together in this vessel. The bones might now be separated,

and have no apparent connection with one another. But what would they do at midnight? What would the bones of those men who had lost their lives under him do when the sun was remotest, and the influence of night and evil loosed the spirits of the unsepulchred? Would the bones spring clattering together, and assume their old relations? Would they leap up and come to him, and drag him with fleshless arms over the side? And what then? What then?

He shook from head to foot, and held the bulwark for support.

What then? Would they drag him under the water, and in some sightless haunt of the injured dead keep drowning and bringing him back to life again, until the angel should summon the deep to yield up its vast tale of men for the final day?

The horrors of the picture overcame him, and with a low moan he fell to the deck and rolled over.

The man of the watch came to him, raised



him, and dashed water over his face until the fainting man returned to consciousness. Then he helped him down to the cabin, brightened the fire, recommended the captain to take something hot before turning in, and said :

“You know, sir, ’twas the bones did it.”

“Yes,” moaned the unhappy man ; “’twas the bones did it.”

The sailor withdrew ; and the other, acting on advice, took something hot and went to bed.

Overcome by the fatigues of a busy day, worn out by excitement, and soothed by the unaccustomed stimulant, he fell into a profound sleep.

He lay with his ear only a few inches from the bulkhead between the hold and the state-room. The noxious vapours trickled through the seams, and filled the cabin. He had left the door open for air and the lamp burning for company should he awake in the night. There was scarcely a sound aboard the vessel. The chain grating occasionally in the hawse-

pipe was the only noise that invaded the silence, save the wash of the bay at the water-line and now and then a soft movement among the cargo, as, wasted by exhalation, some small piece fell through the interstices.

It drew towards midnight.

Captain Paul slept on. He lay upon his back. The clothes had slipped off his head, and the lamplight shone full upon his face. On his face the sweat was gathering. His mouth was trembling. His eyes were half-open, his hands clenched, his breathing stertorous. Captain Paul was dreaming, and in his dream he was wishing that he might die.


In his dream the worst fancies which had distracted his waking moments had taken shape, and he was pursued through tangled forests by the unapparelled skeletons of his dead crews. Now they seized him, and strove to drown him in a stream of insufficient depth ; their attempts failed, only to be repeated innumerable times.

Now he had been drowned and lay ten

thousand fathoms below the surface of the ocean, sensible still. Ghastly skeletons goaded on obscene creatures of prodigious shapes to attack him, and he was powerless to resist, powerless to move, powerless to extinguish what remained to him of consciousness. He could neither close his eyes nor avert them from the degrading monsters that wound and crawled about him. After an interminable time spent in this appalling region, in this unendurable company, one of the fleshless heads drooped to his ear, and a shrill whisper told him he was to spend his whole eternity as he now lay. Upon this he gathered all his faculties and screamed, and the vision passed.

Its disappearance was followed by a condition of lethargic wakefulness in which he was unable to separate the substantial from the visionary.

He knew he was aboard the *Star of the Sea*. He knew he was lying in his own berth. He knew these were the deck - beams overhead. Beyond this point he was not clear about any-



thing. He could not stir hand or foot, and his tongue clave to his palate. The light of the lamp became enormously magnified. He thought at one time that the firmament must have been rent open, and the insufferable radiance of heaven disclosed.


What could it be ?

The lapping of the water against the side of his berth swelled into the trampling of a mighty host. The light seemed to grow stronger, the tread of the multitude more loud, and the swaying of the ship became the trembling of earth beneath ten thousand myriads of feet.

The clock struck twelve.

Ah ! He was right after all ! That was the Last Trumpet. Heaven was open, and the races of Adam were rolling towards Jehoshaphat.

Before the last chime of the clock had ceased to vibrate a sound came through the bulkhead from the hold. This time it was no faint rattle, but a long crushing and grinding noise, followed by a wild clatter, as though the cargo, moved by some power



beneath, were suddenly rising up. Against the bulkhead dry hard substances began to beat and clatter, at first faintly, and then louder and louder, until a perfect shower of blows fell upon the planking.

Cold sweat poured down the listener's face. His eyes dilated, and his muscles were stiff with dread. Then a voice* said in a dreary monotonous tone :

“Captain Paul! Captain Paul!”

Instantly upon hearing his name pronounced the lethargy left him, and he sat up, muttering inarticulately.

“Captain Paul! Captain Paul!” the voice went on, while the clatter ceased. “We are the bones of the men you have murdered.”

He shrieked and covered his head.

“Murdered by sailing with us. You are accursed upon the sea. Misfortune follows you wherever you steer. Why do you continue at the sea when you can do so only by adding year after year to our number?”

"What can I do?" hoarsely asked the captain, covering his face still more closely, and sitting motionless, as though invisible hands held him on every side.

"Leave this ship at once and for ever. Never put foot aboard a ship in open water again. If you do not promise this we will come to you and tear you out of your berth and drag you to the bottom of the sea."

He was without even the hope that terror would kill him. He could not speak. Again the awful rattling went on with tenfold violence.

"Do you consent?" Demanded in a threatening tone.

"I do! I do! In God's name I do! Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!"


"Then swear it."

"I swear it, as I hope to see heaven."

"Swear it by us, the dead."

"I swear."

"If you break this oath your doom is sealed. Remember!"



Once more the appalling noise was resumed. It galvanised the man into motion. He sprang out of his berth, and without waiting to take a single thing with him, dashed up the companion-ladder, rushed to the stern of the *Star of the Sea*, drew in the painter of the boat, threw himself into her, and sculled with all his might to the shore.

Impelled by terror he soon reached the land, and having moored the boat to a tree, set off at the top of his speed to the city. By the time he gained it the dawn was in the sky.

How different was the story he had now to tell his wife from that of just thirty-eight hours before. He had not only experienced terror enough to kill an ordinary man, but abandoned his vessel, and solemnly forsworn the sea for ever. What was now to become of her, and his unfortunate children?


When noon came, and the city heard he had the previous night run away from his vessel, the surprise and displeasure ran riot. The wind had

changed, and was now fair. As soon as Matthew saw this his anger knew no bounds, and without a moment's delay he had the unhappy captain summoned to appear before the court. The case was heard the next day, and then Matthew told his tale, and, after him, a sailor bore testimony to the desertion.

Then, amid black looks and chilling coughs, Captain Paul came forward and spoke.

First he had a kind of nightmare that almost maddened him. In the middle of his dream or vision a noise arose among the cargo, and the bones began to rattle, and he was affrighted almost to loss of reason. He gave the matter of the words spoken by the awful voice, and wound up by telling of the oath, and declaring that no matter what the consequences he should keep that oath.

He who pleaded in the interest of the accused asked if he might put a few questions to the sailor. The sailor was recalled. It was elicited from him that when Captain Paul went aboard the men determined to leave the ship in a body. Later



they decided to try and make him leave instead. At midnight they went down into the hold and made a violent disturbance among the cargo, and, having terrified the master, put the oath to him as described. The flight of Paul followed immediately.

When the unlucky man heard this he smote his palms together in anguish, crying :

“Oh, why did you do this? You have stolen the bread out of the mouths of my wife and little ones. They will starve, for I can never go to sea again. I must keep my oath! I must keep my oath! I must keep my oath!”

Those who administered justice said that owing to the circumstances of the case they should inflict only a nominal fine, provided he returned immediately to his ship.

“My oath!” he cried. “My oath! I cannot break my oath!”

They tried to reason with him. They assured him an oath so obtained, and so sworn, was not good in the eyes of the law.

But he held to his purpose, and would not be moved.

Nothing, they explained, remained for them to do but to fine him. In default of payment the accused was to go to prison for one month.

The respectable seafaring man told those who sat in judgment that he could pay no fine, and submitted to be led to prison without a word of complaint or protest.

On the morning of the tenth day of his incarceration, he sat wearily counting the sluggish seconds, and wondering how it went with his family. Suddenly, the bolts and bars of the cell were withdrawn, and a man in water-bailiff's uniform entered. The man took off his hat, and said :

"Captain Paul, I have been sent to fetch you. There is a cab waiting. Can you come at once?"

"How can I go? My time is not up. You are not playing me any trick?"

"Far be it from me to play any trick on a

man in trouble. I have been sent for you. You can come with me. The fine has been paid, and you are to see those who paid it. I am to tell you no more, if you please."

The other was stunned and stupefied. He did not try to guess from what quarter deliverance had come. "It can't be my wife," he reflected heavily; "she would have come for me herself, poor girl."

In a few minutes he and the water-bailiff were in the cab. They drove rapidly through several narrow streets, and stopped finally at the offices of the Harbour Board.

"What can it mean?" thought the unhappy man; "some new trouble, no doubt." He asked the water-bailiff: "How's the wind?"

"Nor'-east."

"Ah, it's always from the eastward when my luck is at the worst."

He was conducted into the board-room, where all the commissioners were sitting.

"Here's Captain Paul," cried the water-bailiff,

as the respectable seafaring man arrived at the end of the long table, and stood facing the chairman.

“Captain Paul,” said the chairman, arranging some papers before him, “I am to inform you that the attention of the commissioners has been attracted by the late trial in which you occupied a prominent position. They have seen with regret the position in which you were placed by a cruel plot. They have observed with sympathy the extremity to which you were reduced by your adherence to what you believed to be a moral bond, extracted under the operation of that cruel plot. By private subscription among themselves they have raised a sum sufficient to pay off the fine inflicted upon you. By a unanimous vote they have elected you harbour-master, in the room of Captain Joseph, deceased. They desire me to express their conviction that one who has with such fortitude and determination followed the dictates of his conscience when counter to his interests, will always perform his

duty fearlessly and to the best of the sound judgment they know him to possess."

The very first sign of returning prosperity was the reappearance in its accustomed place of the respectable seafaring man's wonderful hat. Two days after his appointment he strode down the quays under the shadow of that strange appliance. But no one now dared even to think of it disrespectfully, for he was harbour-master of the city. By right of his office he might have worn a low hat with a gold band. But he forewent the privilege, and never afterwards abandoned the hat which had lent him distinction in the days of his obscurity.

THE ONE AND THE OTHER



THE ONE AND THE OTHER.

I.

THE summer sun had not yet risen. The white silver radiance of the morning spread in the sky over the eastern sea. Blue twilight rolled stealthily downwards towards the west. Overhead stretched unfathomable depths of hueless air. From the azure limits of the mysterious ocean to the gloomy rim of the patient land no cloud broke the purpose of the light. Careworn passionless cliffs rose from the still waters, lifting watchful heads against the east. No sound of earth or sea marred the stupendous calm, falling like an insensible dew of silence


from the ether deserts of the morning. It seemed as though creation had gone no farther here than the separation of the dry land from the waters, and the gathering of the light from the darkness. No bird sailed by; no cry sounded; no shadow of beast lengthened on the cold gray uplands. Day was rising out of the ocean to illumine a stagnant sea, a voiceless land.

In the cold blue dimness of the sea stood three fixed objects: Close to the shore, what seemed a tall, dull-red, shattered rock; midway between the shore and the horizon, what seemed a spire of sullied sapphire; near the horizon, partly against the misty azure of the sea, partly against the white silver radiance of the sky, a slender dark bar, rising towards heaven.

What barren desolation the twilight showed!
What prodigality to promise regal glories of
day to this place in which no spirit was arrayed
for worship!

The yellow sun of morning stood over the eastern waters. The pale sky hung low above the fresh blue sea. Against the brown cliffs the level light flowed, broken into a thousand luminous stars of gold by ragged teeth of rocks, and scattered into a thousand shining cataracts by colossal prows of jutting cliffs. Between perpendicular pillars, the sun stretched gleaming arms to seize in burnished hands wet weeds, glittering like the amber hair of some huge monster rising out of the unexplorable depths. No bird sailed by, no cry sounded, no shadow of beast lengthened on the warm yellow uplands. Day was looking down upon a voiceless sea, a barren land.

In the startling brightness of the waters stood three fixed objects: Close to the shore, a mass of yellow sails above a great dark hull; midway between the shore and the horizon, dull white sails above a dark hull; and near the horizon, partly against the white crystal sea, and partly against the fiery yellow disc



of the sun, a slender black bar rising towards heaven.

And upon the warm yellow upland facing the east, a woman clad in white, gazing with wistful unexpectant hope upon the face of the waters towards the realms of the morning. There were golden shadows in her loose white robe, and lights of golden bronze in her careless hair. The ships were new to the scene, the day in the east was new, but the look upon her face was old and familiar to her features. Vain yearning had wrought the lines, and love divorced had lent the spirit, and chance had made the face beautiful, and purity had set before and behind a troupe of angelic lictors who kept a circle round her, and slew evil thoughts that would approach.

Where was he? Would he never come? When should she see him again?—hear his voice?—touch his hand? Here was day again. Here were ships safe, in view of land, within her view. Beyond the headland in the harbour ships lay


by hundreds, safe ; those who had done voyages in them, safe, and walking on the secure earth. Hundreds of those men wandered purposelessly about the city. Their time was idle, useless to them. There was no object in their being on shore. They had no ties, no love, no hearts to fill here. But he—he was out beyond the verge of sea. He was swallowed up in the inexplicable mystery of vague distance, the insecure hollows of a hidden ocean. What injury to anyone if one of those ships now there might bear him? What unspeakable plenitude of calm to her! She had no definite fear he would not return in good time ; but while he was away seemed a dreary, wasted, bad time, when life was running idly to seed, and the days were longer than years, and the nights were vacant centuries filled with countless hydra dreads.

Two months wedded, and one whole year divorced by fate ! That was hard to bear. Hard to think of his glances and words and kisses that had been, and of the vacant eyes and meaningless words and idleness of heart that were.

Idleness of heart! Ah no! The waiting heart is never idle; but oh, the waiting arms are weak with longing, the waiting eyes are sunken for want of joy, the waiting lips droop for want of cherishing! Oh Dead Sea fruit to close the eyes, and winding arms around the fluent air, fancy him circled, and looking once again, freeze and faint!


Come back! Come back! Wherefore has he gone? That old man who had died far down in the south of the other hemisphere might have sent the gold. Why had the old man said: "If he come not instantly upon hearing of my death, he shall have none?"

Why had her love not taken her? Ah yes! He had feared danger for her. Danger of the sea; danger of wild beast; danger of a reeking land. But his danger was her danger. His absence was her death. Had he brought her with him, she would have lived even if stricken; she should have lived until her eyes closed on him for ever, and the heart had ceased to beat,



and the hunger of the spirit had passed away for ever. Who would pause to count any danger, compared with the dull relentless coma of parted hearts!


Danger! And was there not danger in his leaving her behind? Danger which he had never dreamed of. Danger more great than any wickedness except the wickedness which that other man could create. Danger wholly chilling and repulsive; danger of so distracting a kind that to think of it was intolerable. For, who had come that night to the lonely house in the glen when he was gone? Who had stormed and battered at the door, and sought to force the windows, and stood writhing and cursing him that was away and her that was there? Who was he, who, forcing the door, at last stood, blood-stained and pale, within the threshold, his wild eyes flaming with the vengeance which goaded him on? Who was he, whom, stretching forth her hand as he touched her, she saw through the smoke fall wounded, saw grovel, and heard curse her at her feet? Who



was he that she and the other women sought help for across the downs by midnight, and reaching the village, reported of him an accident, and had him carried away? Who was he but the other—the lithe, dark, narrow-shouldered, narrow-faced suitor?

He had followed her about the village before her marriage. He had pleaded to her. He had prayed to her. He had cursed and sworn to her, and flung himself upon the sea-sand and vowed by all that was above to lie there until the rising waters overwhelmed him, unless she raised him up. And then when she had hurried away in terror of his violence, he had sprung to his feet, and, bending his head, run in pursuit; and overtaking her, had thrown himself on his knees, and prayed and blessed, and struck his forehead and wept, until a frenzy of dread seized upon her, the sea-sand seemed to tremble beneath her feet, and the sky and sea were blended by her terrified sight.

What has become of that other? When his



wound was healed he had left; going no one knew whither. Her husband had now been away a year. In two months more he might be back. Where was he now? Where was the other?

She turned her back upon the east, and with the broadening light of day around, and her long slender shadow before, passed across the upland and down to a hollow place above a lonely cove where her home lay.

II.

IT was a bright clear winter night over one of the greatest harbours of South America. Around the harbour silent peaks stretched up into the deep blue air. Above the peaks flamed the southern stars. In the water the solemn reflections of the peaks rested upon a floor spangled with the reflections of the stars. Here and there a light burned on the water. Now and then a voice rose, now and then a chain grated. From

off the land a light wind blew, faintly ruffling the surface of the water, and perplexing and sullyng the concave vault of argent rays beneath.


A large vessel, with all sails set, was leaving the harbour. Silently she glided onward, like a gigantic sea-fowl floating midway between two heavens. She was bound to a port on the western coast of England. This port lay behind an iron coast of gaunt careworn cliffs. Between the cliffs and the entrance to this port the sea ran inward a little way, and in the valley, where the land dipped to meet the sea on the beach, stood a solitary house. In that house two women, a young wife and an old servant, dwelt, expecting the return of the young woman's husband.

The ship was freighted with a general cargo. She carried a crew of twenty-five men and officers, the captain, his wife, and two passengers, men. The captain was low-sized, broad-shouldered, stout, florid ; his wife, younger by ten years, fresh-coloured, comely, and placid. One of the passengers was low of stature, dark, secret, small

across the shoulders, lithe, narrow-faced ; the other was tall, light-haired, athletic, outspoken.

Under the head of the latter, as he slept in his narrow state-room, reposed a locket containing a miniature of the young wife waiting in the lonely glen ; under the head of the former lay a dagger. The taller man never slept without that locket ; the lesser man never without that dagger. *He* guarded the locket with unabated solicitude, and it, like an amulet, shielded him from evil in his wanderings.

He carried the dagger in unrelaxed solicitude : it might help him to make his own life possible ; or it might help him out of life, should his scheme fail. The lighter man had never seen, and did not know the darker, until he had come aboard the previous night ; the darker man had never seen the lighter until the night before, but he knew him. He was there because the other was there. He had come all the way from England to make this voyage with this man. To make with this man this voyage—



or a portion of it, rather; not all—not all. It was his plan that they should not go the whole way together; yet the ship would touch at no port until she reached her final destination.

There were four state-rooms in the ship: two at the foot of the companion ladder, one occupied by the captain and his wife, the other by the chief mate; two off the main cabin, one on the left as you entered, that is at the star-board side, occupied by the fair man—one on the right, close to the door, occupied by the dark man.

A slip of thick glass, two inches wide and twelve long, was let into the deck over each state-room. Through this a weak thin light penetrated, and filled the state-rooms with a feeble phosphorescent mist, enough to discover large objects, without clearly disclosing their forms. By the skylight of the main cabin a broader and fuller light entered; and close to the barometer, suspended in the skylight, hung a lamp with a floating wick, which made a dull

yellow glow. The door of the state-room on the left was unfastened, because its occupant suspected no one. The door of the state-room on the right was unfastened, because its occupant suspected every one of suspecting.

At half-past eleven the officer of the watch came down to the main cabin to look at the barometer and examine the chart. He carried a lantern with him; for the light of the lamp was not sufficient to see the chart by. He stayed a few minutes, and then went away, taking the lantern with him.


At midnight the door of the room on the right was slowly and cautiously opened, and the occupant of the room crept noiselessly out into the main cabin. He was fully dressed. He shielded his eyes from the light of the lamp with one hand, and with the other steadied himself as he crossed the floor on tiptoe to the door of the other room. Here he bent down and listened intently for a long time.

"He is asleep," he thought, and, pulling the

door softly towards him, entered the other's room, and drew the door close once more. He remained half-an-hour, crept cautiously back, regained his own state-room, and flung himself into his berth without undressing. He wiped his forehead, shuddered, and, putting his hand under the pillow, brought forth the dagger, muttering as he did so :

"It's well I hadn't you with me. If I had had you with me when he struck, you should be red now, and all would be spoilt. There is no good in wasting a life. Either he or I must go ; but it would be folly for me to send both off. I must not tempt myself again in that way. I must not hear him breathing in the dark again. I must not feel again his arms clasped tightly across his chest, as though he held her, and dreamed her arms were around him, her sighs in his ears, her breath upon his face. Oh—oh—oh !"

He growled, and, kneeling up and raising the dagger as high as the deck-planks would




allow, he grasped the bed-clothes, dug his knees into them, as though he held his enemy beneath him, and, uttering a suppressed yell, struck with the dagger at the bed, and ground his teeth with a hoarse cry of delight when he felt that the blade had passed through the clothes and the shallow mattress, and bitten deeply into the wood beneath.

He lay back exhausted, and mused:

"He's a powerful man. He could take me across his knee and break my back as he would a sapling. He could lift me with one hand, and fling me down yards away. I felt his muscles. I felt them creep like steel beneath my fingers before he struck. If that blow had met me, I should have been killed, or stunned, or maimed for life. . . . And what better am I than one maimed for life? Am I not maimed for life? Ill-made, puny, mean-looking, and yet with the fire of ten thousand rages shaking me asunder. Why do not some of my paroxysms kill me! That bullet through my shoulder did

not help to strengthen me much. Oh that woman!—that woman! I have been mad about her. I am mad still. I am always mad, only people do not see it. If a man is free with his money, they call him mad. If a man sacrifice himself for his country, or his creed, or humanity, they call him mad. If a man forgive his enemies, they call him mad. If a man tell all the truth, they call him mad. If a man render up treasure-trove, they call him mad. If a man cannot reconcile being edifying in speech and criminal in action, they call him mad. But no man who has the reputation of being a thorough, sound, whole, undeviating, unscrupulous money-grubber has ever yet been called mad by any son of Adam who once had held gold in his hands. And I affect the universal specific; and because I talk figures and quote exchanges I pass current as sane, and will to the end, though I swear the sun is blue and man's body incorruptible."

Next morning at breakfast the taller passenger said to the captain :



"Are there rats in the ship?"


"There are few ships afloat without them. They're lucky."

"But I mean are there any aft—hereabouts?"

"I never saw or heard any. The ship is too new for them hereabouts."

"Well, one crept across my throat last night. I felt him. I waited until I judged him to be on the edge of the berth, and then I struck at him, missed him, and hit the back of a chair. Look." And he held up his great right hand, the outer edge of which was swollen and blue.

"Oh," cried the captain's wife, "his poor hand! You must put it in warm water. I'll fetch some from the galley." And she went, and returned soon with hot water in a basin, and stiped his hand. He smiled, and made little of his mishap, and the captain's wife smiled at him. "Such a hand!" she murmured, in soothing admiration. "What a blow it could strike! Why, the poor chair must be in splinters.



Does it," holding and chafing the hand in both hers, "belong to anyone?"

"Yes," he answered, with a soft smile of memory and expectation. "The hand is going back to someone that owns it, and it must get well in a hurry; for, although it's so big and clumsy, you'd be surprised how well satisfied a small white one is to lie in it."


"No, no—not surprised. It is a man's hand, big and powerful. I am not surprised. Are you surprised?" glancing at her husband.

"No. But you will make it soft like a woman's if you keep it too long in that water. The hurt is nothing—the cure very bad." He laughed a simple-hearted laugh at his own wit.

The dark passenger rose hastily, and went on deck.

"The coffee must have scalded him," laughed the captain's wife.


"Upon my word," smiled the fair passenger, looking at his hand, "it seemed more like jealousy than a burn."



The three enjoyed this joke a great deal, and continued their breakfast.

When the other gained the deck, he walked quickly up and down awhile. Then going amidships, he swung himself up on the bulwarks, and seizing the gunwale of a boat still hanging at the davits, leaped into her, flung himself down on the sternsheet, and lay upon his back, with eyes of devouring jealousy turned upon the blue chasm between the two buff cliffs of sails rising at each side of him to the pale sky.


"Did you see it?" he cried, in tremulous rage. "Did you see it? She—this woman, this captain's wife—smiled on him, and laughed at me! That is always the way. Always my fate. Can I help myself? No. But what has made me vile? What has made me reckless? What has driven me mad? It is this contrast of smiles. This captain's wife is half in love with him—or at least has that reflected interest in him which a good wife, the wife of a good husband, feels for the good husband of another woman. It is



a kind of great-hearted freemasonry of which I can never learn the signs. Never! never! never! What delicious sympathy! I saw that captain's wife play with this man's hand as though she sought to soothe his pain by deceiving him into the belief a hand far away was caressing him. Oh that hand far away! I would give all my life, my soul, the whole inventory of my passion, for that hand!"

He glared at the sky as though it were a living foe. Then he drew up his knees to his chin, uttered a wild imprecation, and shot out all his limbs suddenly and lay still, with white damp face, exploring the viewless depths of the chasm of sky between the two buff cliffs of sails.

The ship had sailed out of the southern winter seas into spring of the southern tropics. For days she had been becalmed, rolling slowly to and fro in a warm placid ocean. An awning had been spread over the quarterdeck, and here




in the cool afternoons the captain, his wife, and the two passengers walked or sat. The dull monotony of the calm weighed heavily upon all, and various plans had been tried to beguile the tedious hours.

An hour before dusk one evening, the captain ordered a bottle to be suspended from the foreyard by a rope-yarn, and getting up a gun, the three men spent the time till dusk trying to strike the bottle with a bullet. At dark the bottle still hung uninjured, and they agreed to let it swing, and renew the pastime the next evening.

Since they had entered milder latitudes, the light-haired passenger had slept on deck for coolness. The other passenger still slept in his state-room.


On the night of the first evening's shooting, all but the watch had retired before eleven o'clock. The tall passenger lay on his mattress under the awning. The captain and his wife had withdrawn to their state-room. The dark traveller was in his state-room. All but the watch and the dark



traveller were asleep. He lay on his back, with his eyes fixed on the dull blur of blue where the glass was let into the deck. There was not a sound aboard the vessel, save now and then a slumberous creak of spar or cordage, as the ship rolled slightly to one side or the other. The waking man was thinking—thinking in words, as the miserable always do, the happy never.

“We are nearly halfway home now,” he mused, “and yet there has been no chance. I have been utterly useless, powerless. It is not as easy as I thought it would be. To think that two men are shut up in this vessel, face to face, meeting every day, never two hundred feet apart, and yet I can devise no plan! It seems incredible. I have been wasting time. I must look around me sharply. Ay, that’s easy to say, but how is the thing to be done?”

He stopped thinking for awhile to rest his mind, in order that it might be in full vigour when he took up the main subject. But his mind began to run on again before he had given



it permission, and in a direction not exactly such as he had reserved it for.

“It is utterly impossible that we two land ever again. If such a thing happened, I should be in a dock within a month. She would, of course, tell no one now near her of that night I got the bullet in my shoulder. But when he is back ; when they sit in the evening looking at the sea ; when his arm is around her waist, and her head is on his shoulder ; when they have kissed and sighed, and sighed and kissed again and again—Ugh ! Curse me ! . . . I am going mad with such pictures ; and worst, I am confusing my head, and confounding my purpose. . . . She will tell him, and he will not lie still. I shall be arrested ; I shall be tried for attempting to break into a house with a murderous intent ; I shall be convicted. That won’t do. Death is a trifle compared to that. My own death is a trifle compared to that ; and his death—nothing at all.”

He paused here a long time, and hung over


the thought, surveying it, like a hawk above its prey.

“If he were dead and I were there, something might be done. Heaven might be moved in my interest—or hell. Time might help me. The very violence might plead for me, if he were gone. My wound might have eloquent persuasion. My constancy might affect. If he were dead. . . . If he were dead——”

He hung over this thought as he had hung over the former one ; but longer now, and with more calculation in his eye. When he resumed, his thoughts had proceeded only one step ; there had been no slurring of chains, no missing of links.

“And how is his death to come?”

Longest of all he hung over this. He lay as if fearing to breathe, lest he should disturb the supreme repose of his mind. At length he shut his eyes hastily for an instant, as though he had made an end of his speculations ; rose with stealthy care, and sat white and shivering on the edge of his berth.




He got down, and stole into the main cabin and crossed it. Opening the locker where the arms were kept, he took the gun they had been using that evening. It was loaded.

He looked at the deck-planks overhead, and selecting a spot, touched it cautiously with his hand.

"He is asleep there!" he whispered. "He is asleep there! I can fancy I feel the beating of his heart against my hand!"

He listened intently. There was no sound of footstep. He could catch the heavy breathing of the man sleeping on the deck above his head. The cold perspiration stood out on his forehead. He threw the loose portion of his coat over the lock of the gun to deaden sound, and raised the cock slowly. Then sitting down on the cushion behind him, he placed the gun across his knees and wiped his pallid face.


Suddenly he dropped on his knees, raised the gun to his shoulder, and pointed it at the spot where his hand had touched the deck-planks.



For a full minute he remained as if petrified. Then he rose slowly, sat down on the cushion, and placed the gun across his knees. He trembled as though an ague were upon him. He wiped his forehead on his coat-sleeve, and bent abjectly, like one exhausted by some terrific physical contention.

"I can't afford a luxury like that again," he mused. "How I kept my finger quiet on the trigger I don't know. I felt the kick of the gun; I heard the smash of the bullet against the wood, and the cry and leap of him above. His last cry! His last leap! And then I waited, waited, waited, basking in the calm following his breathing; seeing his pale face turned up; feeling his limbs gradually stiffen, stiffen, until something damp and warm dripped through the bullet-hole in the plank, and fell on my forehead. I cannot afford luxuries of this kind again."

He rose, let down the hammer, opened the locker, and taking a worm drew the wadding out of the gun, rolled the bullet into his hand, and put it in his pocket. Then, having replaced the



gun, he went quietly to his own room, closed the door and fastened it.

He lifted the bedclothes out of the berth, and hung them across the door. Having doubled the towel twice, and wrapped it in a black silk handkerchief, he pinned it with two clasp-knives across the slit of glass in the deck. Then he lit a candle, drew the bullet out of his pocket, took a gimlet from a box, and with his fingers pulled out the nail on which the towel had hung. After this he sat down and rested, with his elbow on the side of his berth and his head on his hand.

In a little time he roused up. He caught the bullet in his left hand, and holding it firmly in the circle of his thumb and forefinger against the root of his forefinger, commenced slowly and carefully boring a hole through it with the gimlet. When this was done he dropped the nail into this hole. The nail was of the ordinary shape—an elongated wedge. It went only partly through the bullet. The hole was not large enough to admit the thicker portion, and two-thirds pro-

jected. Forcing in the nail softly until it held securely, he placed the bullet under his pillow, beside the dagger, and having taken off his own clothes and put out the light, he pulled down the bedclothes from behind the door, the muffling from the slip of glass, and went to bed.

Next evening the shooting at the bottle was resumed. The evening before the captain had loaded all the guns; this evening the dark man offered to load them. He suggested that the ill-success of the previous day might have arisen from the charges being improperly inserted, and he claimed to have paid a good deal of attention to the subject of charging guns.

"For instance," he said to his fellow-passenger, "you could easily have struck that bottle under fair circumstances."

"I don't know. I am not a very good marksman even with my fist, and the blow I hit the chair has not improved my aim very much."

Each had fired several shots. The captain's wife was looking on and displaying great interest

in the contest. She was reproaching them with their ill-success. Her husband had attempted to divert her banter by inviting her to try a shot. She had frequently declared a conviction that she could hit the bottle. The sun was near the west. They had arranged that they would each fire one more shot, and then cease for the night. The order of firing was, first, the captain; then the dark man; and, last, the other. The bottle hung from the port side of the foreyard; the ammunition lay on a camp-stool at the starboard bulwark of the quarterdeck. The shots were fired from the port bulwark of the quarterdeck, on a line with the after-end of the cabin skylight.

When the gun was handed to the captain for his last shot his wife said to him :


"Well, I suppose you intend trying to break it this time. I believe you have been only playing at taking aim. If you don't feel sure of hitting it, give me the gun, and I'll fire your last shot. The ship's crew must not think we are all such bad marksmen. They will mutiny."

He handed her the gun. She raised it to her shoulder, but her courage failed, and she returned it with a laugh. "As I had it covered the ship rolled, and swung it away from me. Only for that I should have fired and hit."

"No doubt," laughed the captain; "but you were more afraid of the report, and your shoulder, than of missing."

The captain fired without effect, and handed back the weapon to be re-charged. After him the dark man fired. Still the bottle swung uninjured.

Now it came to the last shot of the evening and that was the tall passenger's. The other, as he loaded the piece, kept his back to the port side, where the three stood. He put in a double quantity of powder, and then tore off the spring at the back of the snapper on the flask. "An accidental overcharge," he whispered to himself. "That will account for *it*; and here's the flask with the spring gone, to account for the overcharge."



Instead of taking up a bullet from among those on the canister-lid, he drew the one with the nail still sticking in it out of his pocket, and dropped it down the barrel, with the head of the nail towards the muzzle. "Now," he thought, as he drove the steel ramrod with redoubled force, "*that* bullet may leave the gun, but I think it won't. I'll wedge it tight, and all the explosion will take place at the breech and burst it and kill him." He smiled in fierce triumph at the vacant expanse of sea, and then, calming his features and quieting his eyes, crossed the deck and handed the weapon to the other.

As the man was about to raise it to his shoulder the woman stepped forward.

"Is this to be the last shot?" she demanded.

"Yes, the last," answered the man who held the gun.

"Then I'll fire it, if you will allow me. I'll show I'm not afraid of the report, or of my shoulder." She took the gun from his hands as he offered it.

"You!" cried the other. "You!"

"Yes. Do you think I'm afraid?" She looked half-angrily half-scornfully at him, and her eyes rested on his narrow sloping shoulders.

"No," he answered. Then he paused awhile, keeping her idle with the expression of thought in his eyes. "Will you allow me to make a suggestion? I think if you stood on a chair, and rested your left elbow on the bulwark, you would be able to take a steadier aim."

"But the recoil would overbalance me, and I should fall."

"There is no fear. Besides, I'll stand behind and save you."

"You!" with a half-pitying laugh. "I should carry you to the deck with me as I fell. Let him"—glancing at the other passenger—"stand behind, if it is better I should fire as you say."

"Very well. Allow me to lower the hammer until all is ready." He did so, and sought a chair. As he went he set his teeth and

drove his finger-nails into the flesh of his hands.

Should he let her fire that gun? She had laughed at him; she had scorned him; she had said: "Let him stand behind—I should carry you to the deck." She had looked pityingly at his mean shoulders when she alluded to the recoil. His scheme had fallen through. That man would not fire that gun. Should he let the woman? He could not make up his mind. She had never done anything to win his forbearance. All the contrary. Should he let her? He could not make up his mind.

He found a chair and brought it. He set it close beside the port bulwark, on a line with the after-end of the cabin skylight. He mounted it, to see that it was firm; then, getting down, he said:

"May I assist you?"

She gave him her hand. When she was safely standing he said:

"Will you allow me to show you how to

"You!" cried the other. "You!"

"Yes. Do you think I'm afraid?" She looked half-angrily half-scornfully at him, and her eyes rested on his narrow sloping shoulders.

"No," he answered. Then he paused awhile, keeping her idle with the expression of thought in his eyes. "Will you allow me to make a suggestion? I think if you stood on a chair, and rested your left elbow on the bulwark, you would be able to take a steadier aim."

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"You!" with a half-pitying laugh. "I should carry you to the deck with me as I fell. Let him"—glancing at the other—"stand behind, if it is better say."

"Very well. All
until all is re

hold the gun so that you may secure the greatest steadiness and the least recoil ? ”

He obtained permission. The others looked on, pleased to see the improvement in his manners. He had never shown so much interest in anything else.

He stood on his right foot and kept the other against the back of the chair to steady himself. He placed the elbow of her left arm on the bulwark, and made her lean so that all the upper portion of her figure hung over the water. The position was extremely awkward, but he insisted. Those on deck wondered at the great interest he was displaying, and still more at the strange attitude he recommended.

When all seemed ready, he took the gun and raised the hammer. His final instructions were : “ Don’t close your left hand until I tell you. I’ll place the barrel in it, and, when I tell you, raise your right hand to the breech. All this gives steadiness, like saluting in fencing.”

He laid the barrel on the open palm of her left hand, and drew the butt to her shoulder. At that moment the chair upon which they both stood trembled and swayed slightly. He seemed to overstrain himself, and in the apparent endeavour to recover he loosed his hold of the gun, and with a swift jerk it shot down the side of the vessel and disappeared. Thus he spared her life.

"How awkward!" cried the woman.

He leaped to the deck, and stood in front of the captain. "I let your gun fall overboard. It was stupid of me, but I'll pay you its value."

"It wasn't worth much. It had done its work."

"It might have done more," he muttered as he walked forward and disappeared down the companion.

The ship had sailed from the spring of southern sea, through the tropical summer, into the autumn of the northern seas. If the day

were bright and clear, it would have been almost possible to see the headlands shielding the port of her destination. But the clouds were low and ragged, and the air was thick with tangled mist-wreaths, and gray with shattered spray, and dense with flying rain. A narrow shallow vault of hideous yellow-gray raged over her ; below, the yellow-green waters rolled in frantic terror, and leaped upon her and clung to her as though they sought security from the winds upon her deck. Her torn sails quivered in the wind, her bellying cordage trembled and shrieked. Her fore-mast and main-mast lay over the side, a sodden waste of sullen danger. Her mizen-mast still held, but the sails were shattered and the rigging distraught. She was fair before the wind. She was dying in the arms of the blasts. Her cargo had shifted, and the water was rising ; and this almost in sight of land ! Here, under the cliffs of England, in sight of the windows of their homes, those in that ship debated which was the least desperate chance—to stay, or to

launch the only boat remaining. It was idle waste to work the pumps. All stood aft, and at length the captain gave orders, and the after star-board boat—the only one left—was got ready.


It was a large boat, and would carry all. The shore was not more than ten miles off, fair down in the wind, and there were two good chances—they might either reach the mouth of the port, or drift into the little bay. The ship could not float another hour, perhaps not half that time. This was the captain's reasoning.

All was quickly made ready. The vessel was brought with her port side to the sea, so that the boat might be launched in the shelter. First they got the captain's wife in, then the passengers. As the crew were taking their seats the dark passenger said to his companion, when only one or two men remained on board the ship :

“Have you any brandy?”

“No, I don't want any.”

“But the woman. If I had any I should bring it.”



"There is some in the boat."

"No knowing how long we may be here. The men may lay hands on the brandy. If I had any I'd bring it."

"There's some in my room; but hardly any time to fetch it."


"Plenty. You run. I'll see you are not left behind."

"Very good."

"Where are you going, sir?" roared the captain angrily, as he saw the tall form clamber up the mizen-chains.

"He's forgotten his purse," answered the dark passenger. When the man disappeared over the side, the other shifted his position in the boat. She was made fast to the vessel, not by the davit-ropes, but by a long painter. It was dangerous to lie under the davits, lest she should touch the ship's side and be staved.

"I'll hold the line," said the passenger to the man who had it rove under the foremost thwarts.



"Better let me, sir; you're not used to ropes."

"Oh let me; I promised him."

The sailor relinquished his hold; the boat gave a wild plunge backward, and the line flew over the gunwale with a loud flap as the form of the tall man rose above the bulwark of the ship. He had been left behind.

A cry of horror went up from all those in the boat. For an instant the man on the ship did not appear to comprehend. He beckoned them to return. Then suddenly he conceived his real position, threw up his hands wildly towards heaven, and, clasping his arms around a mizen-shroud, sat down on 'the bulwark, and so remained as long as those in the boat could see the ship.

So he sat without motion, stunned and frozen by the thought that he, of all others, should be lost within sight of his own home, almost within the hearing of his wife's voice.

The ship still floated. He did not pause

to look round. He did not care to wonder why she had not sunk. His fate was sealed; he awaited it without struggle.

It was dusk, and still he sat and hung on by that shroud. Hours had passed since the boat left.

Suddenly the ship seemed to spring feverishly from the water. He started in surprise; looked round; rose to his feet, and holding the shroud still, shaded his eyes and looked around.

A small land-locked bay, into which the sea roared and bellowed. In front of him a low beach. Upon the beach a heavy surf; and above that beach, in that dim glen now muffled in mist, his home—his wife. And he——

“No, no! No, no! Where is the flask? Now for a life-buoy. Good! . . . A heavy bump that time. . . . Rocky bottom. She’ll be in pieces in half-an-hour. Ha! she’s dipping her nose, is she? That won’t do. She’ll dip more in a minute, or less. . . . Not more than a hundred-and-fifty yards to shore, and no rocks, and a life-buoy, and the heaven-sent brandy, and her!—

and her!—and her! . . . Ah, she's dipping her nose again, is she? That won't do. 'Twon't do to wait until she shows her keel in air. Now for it! Oh God!"


"A stiff fight, but it's over! What's that? Ugh! My fellow passenger dead! Only he told me to get the brandy, I'd never have fetched here. I'll pull his body up a bit, and bury him to-morrow. He shall have a tablet saying he saved my life. Stay! here are people about. I wonder is there anyone who knows me? I'll see this little crowd—someone there may know of my wife. . . . Does anyone here know me?"

All fell back from one woman, who, seated on a beam, gazed with fixed stony eyes at the name of the ship on a piece of wood.

"Does anyone here know me?"

She tottered to her feet. He went to her.

"Do you know me?" he murmured, as he caught her in his arms, from which some tresses of seaweed still hung.



"Ah!"

"What ails my wife?"

"Come away! Come away! Hold me!
The sea is not coming back for you?"

"No, never."

"Come away! Come home! You will take
me far into the heart of England to-morrow?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"Away from the sea?"

"Away from the sea."

"Then you must be he, and alive; for nothing
could take me from the sea while my husband was
away. I thought you were drowned when I saw
the ship's name. But see; your face is cut!"

And then a spasm shook her, and the ice
around her heart was thawed; and she clung
to him, and murmured in his embrace, and wound
her arms round him to inarticulate breathings of
joy.

O'CALLAGHAN-BRIEN'S
DAUGHTER




O'CALLAGHAN-BRIEN'S DAUGHTER.

O'CALLAGHAN-BRIEN, of Holywell House—or, as he was universally called in the neighbourhood, Brien of Holywell—was not a rich man for a county gentleman in Ireland. He owned two thousand acres of good Tipperary land. He was an easy landlord, and during the thirteen years he had been master of Holywell House he never advanced the rent of a tenant. The tenants looked up to him with filial affection, and he looked on them with paternal eyes. Not that he was a free or communicative man. On the contrary, he was solitary and taciturn ; but his

desire for seclusion and silence did not spring from any morbid dislike to his race, or any aversion from his fellow-man. His words, when he did speak, were always kindly, and his actions more kindly than his words. He had never done a harsh deed in his life, and a mere list of his good actions would take an hour to rehearse.

He would roam over the farms of his estate, and say a few words to the workmen in the fields, and drop into the farmers' parlours, and have a chat, and maybe "the laist taste in life of a drop of whisky, yer honour," to keep the cold out if it was cold, and to keep a chill off if it was warm. He would talk of cattle and sheep, and horses and pigs, and crops and fallows and pasturages, and all the ills that farm-flesh and blade and grain are heirs to.

Once he said to Fahey, of Moonamintrah: "Fahey, that barn is in bad order. It would be only throwing away money to try and patch it up. I don't want you to rebuild it all by yourself; but if you will pay half I will pay the other half,



although, by right, I ought not to lay out a penny on the estate."

"Thank you kindly, your honour," said Fahey gratefully. "And I'll be very glad to put down my half. I won't keep anything dark from your honour, but I have a trifle of money in the bank, and my belief, sir, is, it would be to more advantage on the farm than in the bank."

"You are quite right, Fahey. I am not going to run up the rent on you because I see you are keeping yourself and your place tidy. Never grudge your wife a cloak, or your haggard a gate, because you are afraid if I see you taking care of your family and the farm I'll think of raising the rent. Good-bye, Fahey."

"Good-bye, and God save you kindly, your honour; and may you be long spared to us. Amen. And when Miss Attie comes to be our mistress——"

"Ay, ay, ay. All right, Fahey. I'll send a builder to look about the barn. The old stones will do over again, and any more you want you

can send to my own quarry for, and take them; but you'll have to draw the stones with your own cart and horses. And you can have lime and sand from the kilns and the pit in the same way. They are thinning the Cloona plantation, but that wood will not be seasoned in time. But I'll ask old Connolly what seasoned timber he has in the woodyard, and try if we can't manage it somehow; so that we'll have to divide the cost of only a few hundred of bricks, the slates, and the labour; for, mind, I'll have no more thatched roofs on the estate; and the half won't come heavy on either of us."

And he walked away, making a gesture commanding silence.

Fahey stood looking after his landlord for a long time, and when the figure of the owner disappeared, Fahey hit his thigh a powerful blow with his open palm, exclaiming: "Well, I'm damned!" Which expression, although profane, was no more in Fahey's mind than an uttered note of exclamation after profound unexpressed emotions of admiration, gratitude, and loyalty.

Another day O'Callaghan-Brien met old Billy Quann. "Quann," said he, "why don't you try and do something with that wet bottom under the well?"

"It's bog, rank bog, your honour."

"It is not bog," said the owner; "and you know that as well as any man on the estate. It is only a wet bottom. You are making no use of it now, are you?"

"In the summer, when it's dry, I turn in the cows there for a bit, and maybe they get a mouthful, and maybe they don't."

"How much is there in that bottom?"

"Better than five acres."

"And how much do you pay me for it?"

"Three halfcrowns an acre a-year."

"But it's not worth that to you?"

"No, your honour; but to speak you fair, the other land is profitable, and makes up for the bottom."

"How much do you think it would cost to run a drain from the lap of the bottom to the stream just above Ryan's Mill?"

"Well, I asked that question of Ned Doherty, a most knowledgable man, and he said it would take every ghost of a hundred pounds."

"Now, look here, Quann: if you cut the trenches in the bottom, I'll bring a pipe from Ryan's, although if I thought only of justice I ought not to sink sixpence in the land. Of course your rent will be as now."

"The Lord be good to you, sir; and may you long live to rule over us. I'll cut the trenches with all my heart, and a hundred thousand blessings on you for what you say about the rent; and it is proud I am to think that what little service I may do with the trenches will be there when—may it be a long day off—Miss Attie comes in to the——"

"All right now, Quann. Set to work at once. I'm going into Kilcash next Wednesday, and I'll order the pipes at Maher's, if you call over between this and then with the length we want. Good-day."

And before old Billy Quann could say



another word the owner of Holywell was out of hearing.

On more occasions than these the master of Holywell had said he ought not, in justice, to spend any money on the property. People could in no way understand what he meant by these vague speeches, for of course they said the land would go to Miss Attie when the old man dropped.

O'Callaghan-Brien was the most popular man in the county, but there was around his daughter Attie a feeling so intense and loyal that it reached the chivalric. She was more comely than beautiful, more lovely than comely, more amiable than all. She was, they said, her father's child, with all the softness and engaging sweetness of her dead mother added.

Attie was two-and-twenty years of age, and had been motherless since her infancy. The present owner of Holywell House had married comparatively late in life, and under circumstances which had never been fully understood

in the neighbourhood. He had been an only son, and it was well known he had greatly displeased his father by his marriage. Nothing could have been in stronger contrast with another than the present and former owner of the Holywell estate. The old man had been a positive scourge to the place. He always wore top-boots, always carried a riding-whip, and was always in a passion. There was a vague rumour he had killed a man. Everyone said he had killed his wife by inches. No servants would stop in his house. The outdoor men employed upon the home-farm were continually leaving. He was a bad landlord, a harsh father, and a cruel husband. He was an undersized bow-legged man, looking less of a gentleman than his own stable-boy. The contrast between father and son was never so striking as when the young man brought his wife, the wife he had married against his father's consent, on a visit to the old house. The son was then a tall, slender, handsome man of five-and-thirty, dignified and kindly in his manner;

and exceptionally amiable. The father was a gross, vulgar, boisterous, tyrannical man, sixty-two years of age. The young man and his bride did not stay long at the house ; he took his pretty wife away with him to Dublin, where they lived in a very poor way until she died, when Attie, their only child, was two years old. Father and son never spoke after their parting at the house, no letter ever passed between them, and when the old man died suddenly it was well known he had not forgiven his son, and that he would keep him out of the property if he had the power to do so ; but he had not, and upon old O'Callaghan-Brien's death the son came into possession as a matter of course, and, as a matter of course also, when the present owner died, the acres would go to Miss O'Callaghan-Brien, for the land had not at any time gone of necessity to a male heir, but to the heir, male or female.

Attie herself knew nothing about business, and cared less. She was devotedly attached to her father, and he to her. She was contented with

the days as they went by, and with her position. Let the future take care of itself.

Yes, until she had just reached her twenty-second year, she had never troubled herself about the future, and even now business was the thing farthest from her mind. She knew that, compared to Lord Fenner, her father was a poor man. Lord Fenner lived at Glenire Castle, one of the finest houses in Ireland, and she had heard her father say his Irish estate and his English mines gave him an income of at least twenty thousand a-year. She knew very little about money, but she understood twenty thousand a-year was a respectable income for an Irish viscount.

She would in all likelihood not even then have thought of twenty thousand a-year in connection with the title but for the fact that she knew Lord Fenner very well, had met him frequently of late, and that she had in her desk three letters signed "Fenner," and one of later date signed "Edward," this being in the


same handwriting as the other three, and Edward Waller Longford being Lord Fenner's name.

There was another reason why Attie's mind was now a good deal occupied with Lord Fenner. She had not only met him often of late and received much attention from him, but he was a remarkably good-looking young man, of eight-and-twenty years of age, and of all the pleasant hours she had ever spent the pleasantest were those when he was by.


Of course she had heard people say what a good match young Lord Fenner would be for any girl in the country, and when at first he had singled her out at the few houses where he and she met, she could in no way account for it except by supposing he had chosen her because he felt there could be no danger of his falling in love with her, for all agreed he had exhibited no disposition towards matrimony. But as the weeks went by, and the young lord showed an unmistakable preference for her society, it began to dawn on her that he was making love to her.

At first she was startled, and tried to draw back, but the more she shunned him the more hotly he pursued, until, when it had come to be winter, she had given up all thought of resistance, and allowed herself to drift along the current and come and go as he asked her. Nothing definite had yet passed between the young people, but it was quite plain to all the country round that one of those days, if no accident happened, sweet Attie would become Lady Fenner of Glenire Castle. "What could stop the marriage?" asked people, argumentatively. "Nothing," they answered; "for Lord Fenner was free to please himself, and of course no father in Tipperary, in Ireland, would think of refusing to accept such a man for a son-in-law."

Although there were many fathers and mothers who were sorry they had missed the chance of calling the young lord son-in-law, O'Callaghan-Brien and his daughter were so popular that even the most envious scarcely begrudged them their good luck.




But there was one man who watched the lovers with profound uneasiness, and that man was O'Callaghan-Brien himself. He loved his daughter most devotedly. He was sensible enough to know that he was no longer a young man, that he was drawing near his sixtieth year, and that it was most desirable Attie should be settled before he died, and that young Fenner was a very good fellow, and one of the best matches in the whole country. But still he dreaded the day when that man would ask him for his daughter's hand. He would freely have laid down his life for his daughter's happiness, and he now believed her happiness was wound up in young Fenner. But there was one great obstacle in the way, and of that obstacle neither of the young people knew anything. It had been the one secret of his latter life. Some time or other it would have to be told, and he shrank back from the thought of that day, for then he knew the happiness of his darling daughter would hang in the balance.



The Fenner and Brien estates joined, and when the rumour of an attachment between the daughter of Brien and the lord of Glenire got abroad everyone said what a pleasant thing it was that the properties of the master of Glenire and Holywell were so conveniently situated. A few had hinted at this to old Brien, but he had always shown a most marked aversion from the subject, and plainly indicated that to dwell upon it would be most distasteful to him.

Meanwhile the relations between Lord Fenner and Attie became more distinct, and at length, towards the end of December, he took her hand in his one day and asked her if she would leave it where it lay for ever, and she did not answer or take it away. Then he told her he would forthwith communicate with her father.


Lord Fenner was by no means a shy young man. He had not been in the world for eight-and-twenty years without finding the advantage of a title and twenty thousand a-year. He was a bold, fearless, straightforward country gentle-



man, with the faults and infirmities common to his class. Wild he had been, no doubt, a few years after he came of age. He had long been the Minor Viscount of Fenner, and on attaining his majority and coming into the large accumulations made while he was under age, he went to Paris, and managed to spend all the savings and get forty thousand pounds in debt in a couple of years. But since then he had not only lived a rational life, but had paid off the forty thousand, and devoted as much time and care to his estate as any middle-aged landlord in the country.

But notwithstanding the straightforwardness of the young man, and notwithstanding, moreover, that he was by no means skilled in composition, he resolv'd to place his case before O'Callaghan-Brien in writing.

The second day after the last meeting a letter came from Lord Fenner to O'Callaghan-Brien. It was brief and to the point. He loved Attie—had loved her for a considerable time—and



begged to offer himself to O'Callaghan-Brien as a son-in-law, on the condition that all business arrangements would be satisfactory.

The letter arrived by hand and late at night, after Attie had retired, and while the old man sat alone in the library before a blazing fire.

When he had finished reading he put the letter down on the table, and fell into a profound reverie.

"At last," he thought on waking up. "At last. It has come at last. They both must now be told all. I pray to Heaven the happiness of my child may not be wrecked in this explanation. A thousand times I have blamed myself, and yet I do not see how I could have done better under the unhappy circumstances. There would have been no earthly good in telling my darling before; and when I first saw a little more than friendship springing up between Fenner and her, if I had gone to the young man and told him all, it would look as if he had already committed himself. There is no necessity for

the facts to be generally known, and now I find I must explain all when my darling's heart has been given to him; for of course she has given away her heart, gentle soul. So like her mother, so like her mother in every way, only her mother was better looking, much better looking. I'll ride over to Glenire to-morrow morning and tell all to Fenner. But I must tell Attie first. I must tell Attie first. Ah no, she is not nearly so beautiful as the other Attie, my other Attie."

He rose, and taking a shaded lamp with him, went to an *escritoire* which stood in one of the windows. He opened the *escritoire* and took out a jewel-case. This he opened with slow trembling fingers, and drew from within it a thick plait of golden hair and a plain gold ring.

"They said the hair was not her own, and they said she had no right to wear the ring, my Attie. But I cut this from her head when she lay cold, and I put this ring on her finger in

church when the parson told me. My Attie! They may talk as they will, but I know all. No one knew her as well as I. Who could? No one loved as well as I. And she loved me, my Attie. When I meet her hereafter, I wonder shall I be bent and broken in body and mind, as I am now, or shall I be joyous and full of vigour, as I was then! Who can tell?"

He pressed the tress and the ring to his lips, returned them to the place he had taken them from, locked up the *escritoire*, and went to bed.

Next morning after breakfast he said to his daughter: "Come into the library, Attie, I have something to say to you."

She guessed what this formal invitation had to do with, rose, and followed her father. He placed a chair for her by the fire, and, setting one for himself, sat down.

The old man had risen and dressed early for his ride, but since he had got up it had been snowing slightly, and now the country, far as the eye could see, was covered with a thin coating of

snow. As father and daughter sat at the fire the escritoire lay open at their backs. He had, been in the room before breakfast and had opened the escritoire, and placed his whip and cap on a stool close by.

The father began :

"Last night, after you had gone to bed, I got a letter from Lord Fenner about you. Can you guess the nature of that letter?"

"I—I think I can, father."

"He told you he intended writing to me?"

"Yes, father."

"My dear Attie, we ought both to feel very much flattered by his lordship's offer, and I may tell you at once that, although I shall be very sorry to lose my daughter, the only relative I have on earth for whom I care, there is no one I would more gladly see her married to than Lord Fenner. But, my dear Attie, I fear there may be a difficulty in the way, and I am now going to tell you what you never heard before—the full history of your mother."

The girl glanced up with a look of curiosity and surprise.

"You have known, as long as since you were able to know anything of the kind, that my marriage with your mother was not an ordinary one, and that my father and I did not get on well together towards the end of his life, or, indeed, at all.

"I do not wish to say anything harsh about your grandfather, but I find it necessary to say some things in order that you may know how matters came about, and how they now stand.

"As I told you, your grandfather and I never agreed well together. We had different views on nearly every subject. When I was a young man people said I had some cleverness. I wished to try my fortune in politics. My father would not hear of such a thing. He wished me to go into the Army, and marry an heiress.

"Well, Attie child, neither of us would give way, and we could not agree upon any third course; so he settled four hundred a-year on

me, and told me I might shift for myself as best I could on it, and that he would not give me another penny, and would not pay a penny of debt I might happen to contract. Such an allowance did not make it possible for me to go into politics. So, I am sorry to say, my dear child, I did nothing at all, but wasted the best years of my life in travelling idly from place to place until I was well past thirty, when I met your mother in London."

"In London?"

"In London, child. And now I am about to tell you what you never heard before. You must be prepared for a little shock, but you must make no hasty inference from what I am about to say. The first place I saw your mother was in a theatre."

"Yes, father."

"On the stage of a theatre."


"Was my mother an actress, father?"

"Yes, my child; but she was as good a woman as ever lived."



"I am sure of that, my dear, dear father."

"You must not now speak of it to anyone. You know how strong popular prejudices are against actresses. We were very careful then and ever afterwards. You know those who play upon the stage often, almost always, are known to the public by names which are not their own. Fortunately, even those most intimate with your mother in her connection with the stage did not know her real name; and when we agreed to be married we resolved that she should immediately leave London, sever herself for ever from her stage name and acquaintances, and come to live in some quiet part of Ireland, far out of the track of actors, until I had arranged matters about our marriage with your grandfather. Well, my dear child, I need not go into detail that was distracting then, and would be painful to me now. Your grandfather would not hear of my marrying your mother. He told me he looked on me as a hopeless fool, and that if it pleased me to marry as I had told him, I might do so;



but that not only would he not approve of it, but that he would stop my allowance, and take care——”

Here the old man paused, and took his daughter's hand in his, and stroked it caressingly, apologetically.

“Yes, my father.”

“Now, child, I am going to tell you a very painful thing—a thing which has aged me and bent me down before my time.”

Again he paused.

“What is it, father?”

“You must try and forgive me, Attie. I have done you a grievous wrong.”

“You, father! You, father, done *me* a wrong! Why, in all the world there is not a kinder or a better father than you. It hurts me to hear you say such a thing. Oh my father, my father, say you did not mean it! Say you did not mean what you said last.”

She had risen and gone to him, and thrown her arm around him, and pressed her head against him

The father's voice trembled, but he went on resolutely :

"Your grandfather said that if I married your mother he could not keep the property from coming to me, but he could prevent it coming to my children. I loved your mother more than anything else then in the world. I married her in spite of his threat——"


He rose, drew his daughter towards the window, and taking out the hair and the ring, placed the latter on the slide of the *escritoire*, and holding the former in his disengaged hand, said sadly :

"That is your mother's wedding-ring, Attie, and this is her hair, and you are a pauper."

The girl took the tress tenderly in her hand, and raised it reverentially to her lips.

"You do not speak, child," he said, after a silence for a few seconds. "You will forgive me?"

"Forgive you, father! For what? I do not understand."



"Because I beggared you, child, before you were born."

She looked up in his face with a smile. "Is not Edward rich?"

"Yes, Attie. Fenner is rich enough, but he thinks the land will go with you. The two estates adjoin, and although he might hope to marry a richer wife than you would be if Holywell had been yours, still this place would be a useful addition to his property, and I would not have the feeling of leaving my only child almost penniless. For, Attie, I have not saved nearly as much as I should since I came into the place. You know I was not young when your grandfather died, and I have been easy with the tenants, and although the land was going away from you to some cousin of whom I have hardly heard, I could not see the place in ruins, or neglected, or racked. I have a few thousands laid by, and I shall not be able to give you more than my savings."

"But, father, you told me a moment ago that Edward is rich."

"Yes, Attie; but when I go over to him to-day the first thing I shall have to tell him is about your mother, and then about the property not coming to you. I will go now, my child. I know your heart will be with me. The snow is over, but Sarsfield has faced many a worse day under me. I hope to heaven I may succeed! If I fail it will not be for want of will. Good-bye, darling; good-bye."

He raised her face and bent over her, and kissed her tenderly, tearfully, and then went out of the room with an uncertain step.

When he had gone she left the room, and wandered hither and thither through the house. She could not rest. She had heard the history of her mother that day, and had heard the story of his fortune. Like others, she had always thought the land would come to her some time, a long way off, when she was as old as her father now. This thought was vague as thoughts of

death to the strong. Even now, when she was told she should have the dowry all had expected, she put that thought away from her as trivial. But the story and the account of her father's early days wrought strangely upon her, and disturbed undreamed-of depths in her nature, and she could in no way rest.

What would he (Edward) think of the story her father had to tell him? She knew he loved her for her own sake; but what would Edward think? What would Edward do? Oh, it was such dreary work waiting! Would the hours never go on? In such snow it would take an hour to ride over. Very likely father would lunch with Edward. That would take an hour, and then an hour to ride back. It would be dusk when her father returned.

The dismal dull day wore away slowly, but at length the light began to fade, and Attie stole secretly to a window overlooking the way that led to Glenire.

At last she saw upon the level waste of snow



the figures of two men, not one man, riding towards the house. As they drew nearer she could not doubt that they were her father and lover. All had gone well, and her father had asked Edward to dine with them that evening. Oh her heart, how it beat with joy! Her lover, her gallant sweetheart, her unselfish darling had thought nothing of all that tale when it was placed beside his love for her!

As the two horsemen drew near she left her place at the window and sought her own room. In a few minutes a servant knocked and said Mr. O'Callaghan-Brien wished to see Miss O'Callaghan-Brien in the library.

When she entered the room she found her father alone. He went hastily to her, took her in his arms, and said:

"My darling Attie, I shall be very sorry to lose you, but he is a fine young fellow. I told him all, child, and he said that if your mother was good enough to be my wife, she was good enough to be the mother of his wife, and that

he had intended, if the property here had come with you, he would have settled it on you during your life for pin-money, left it with a couple of thousand a-year as jointure when he died, but that now you will have to trust to his generosity for pin-money, and manage on the two thousand when he is gone. But here he is. He will tell you all the rest himself. I am off to the stables. Those horses want to be looked after."

WON BY NINE



WON BY NINE.


THE town of Clashmore is in the southern inland of Ireland. The assizes are held there ; it is a garrison town, returns a member to Parliament, has a mayor and corporation, a club for county gentlemen, officers, and a few of the genteelst of the townsfolk, and a river navigable for barges. Like almost every other town in Ireland, its prosperity has gradually declined, and it does not now number half as many souls within its boundaries as thirty-five years ago. The grass does not absolutely thrive in the streets, but here and there a few patches are to be seen, and it looks as though the once prosperous town of

Clashmore were about to revert to the original, and fit itself for once more grazing black cattle and timid sheep.

Its manufactures have died ; its commerce has fallen away. You can buy houses there for a song. Ground for building is of no value, and even in the principal streets there are ugly gaps where buildings have fallen down or been burnt down and have been allowed to lie in ruins, because, if they were rebuilt, no tenants could be found to take them.

There are three reasons why Clashmore does not crumble away altogether. It is still the place to which the farm-produce of a large and fruitful country finds its way for export. It has usually a battery of artillery or a squadron of horse and a few companies of infantry, and the gentry about the town still buy many of the things they want in the town.

The few men who, living in Clashmore, are also members of the club, have not sprung from the town, but migrated from the country into the



town or suburbs, and are all of good family. There is as wide a gulf between the trading community and the few people of independent means as between royalty and mere nobility. Caste feeling is very strong. The ordinary shopkeeper or merchant has no more chance of being admitted to the club or invited to the house of any member of it than he has of being allowed to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in the garb of the Giaour. The two classes coalesce as little as oil and water.

In the fine weather a military band usually played one evening of the week in the barrack-square, and on those evenings many of the county people drove and rode in, and the town and suburb branches of the good families came. The sons and daughters of some of the best-to-do merchants and shopkeepers of Clashmore looked in now and then ; but they were overborne and cowed by the more aristocratic promenaders.

Once a-year a flower-show was held in the botanical gardens just outside the town. Hither

thronged the lords and the honourables and the baronets and the squires and the gentlemen, with their ladies and dames and sons and daughters. Hither also gathered the townsfolk in great strength ; but the two classes did not mingle. The first day of the show half-a-crown was charged for admission, the second day admission might be gained for a shilling. The people from the neighbourhood went on the first day, the traders of Clashmore on the second. It was not the difference of the prices of admission that made the difference of attendance, but the difference of class. It would have been looked on as the height of insolence and presumption if any people of the mercantile class attended the show the first day ; it would have been regarded as a whimsical derogation if any of the better class attended the second day.

The last train both on week-days and Sundays passed through Clashmore at half-past nine. In the fine weather the townspeople used the platform of the railway-station as a place of meeting

and promenade. The better born of the neighbourhood would not dream of attending such a place.

In the circle of the whole year there was but one occasion on which the two castes came closely together, and even then it was only the men of the higher class mingled with the stratum below. The cause of this break of the general rule occurred in the week immediately preceding Christmas, when the annual charity bazaar of the Sisters of Charity was held in the court-house. The ladies of the order distributed the money realised by the bazaar among the poor, without distinction of creed; the gentry and townspeople without distinction of creed contributed to it. The wife of the Member for the town, who was a Protestant, sent the most valuable prize for the lottery or for the raffle. The Member always attended, and spent his loose money in the best humour possible. You might count upon finding a lord there at any time of the day, and in the evening the officers

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of the garrison dropped over after mess, and formed a conspicuous addition of colour to the scene. All formality and distinctions were laid aside. The tanner spoke to the peer, and the tallow-chandler to the deputy-lieutenant, as though they had been intimate for years; and, of course, everyone spoke to the matrons and maids, each of whom had some cunning wile to rid you of your money.

Now Clashmore, although a small town, was famous for the pretty faces to be found in it, and in the year of grace 1870 the loveliest girl in the town of Clashmore was Ellen Cantwell, only child of William Cantwell, seed-merchant. She was by no means the most beautiful girl in the town, but no one could see her and, knowing all the other girls with pretensions to good looks, deny that she was the loveliest. She was no taller than the medium height of women. Her complexion was pale, only a slight pink was in her cheek. Her eyes were dark hazel; her forehead was the most exquisite of her features, it being

low and very clear in outline, and transparent at the temples. The greatest charm of all was not one of outline or figure, but of carriage. There was in the way she carried her head something dreamy and poetic and unutterably amiable. It had that graceful unstudied drift you find in all the lines of Raffaele. Instinctively you knew the *pose* was not the result of art. In the year 1870 Ellen Cantwell was nineteen years of age, and around her the affection of the people of Clashmore stood like a rampart.

The bazaar that year was particularly brilliant. Never had there been such a large attendance of the local aristocracy, and consequently never had there been such a financial success.

The bazaar lasts two days and two nights. The great event of the opening day is the lottery, in which are a couple of thousand prizes, varying in value from a penny to ten or twenty pounds. All through, both days and nights, the raffles for the various articles not included in the lottery go on. At the end of the



second evening all things undisposed of are put up for auction; and, after the auction, the lottery-room having been cleared up for the purpose, there is usually a dance.

That year one of the most attractive prizes to be raffled for was given by Mrs. Fitzgerald of Bawn. The donation was a handsome ornamental chimney-clock. At the time this gift was made to the Sisters of Charity by Mrs. Fitzgerald, her eldest son, the owner of the fine old Bawn estates, was travelling on the Continent. It so fell out that he arrived at Bawn House three days before the bazaar, and that on the first and second day he visited the rooms where it was held.


To each raffle two ladies are appointed—one to tout, and the other to stand behind the table and take the tickets and record the throws. It is always so arranged that the more business-like lady of each pair is selected to keep the record, and the better-looking to act as decoy.

Over the clock presented by Mrs. Fitzgerald



presided Mrs. Fennessey, a lady of good position and great influence in the town. The tout for Mrs. Fennessey was Miss Ellen Cantwell. With a bouquet and a bundle of tickets in one hand, she glided about the room quietly and shyly, but with the most deadly effect on the pockets and hearts of the young townsmen, and of the young men who were not of the town.

The bazaar-rooms were closed each day at four in the afternoon, and were not re-opened until seven in the evening. It was close to four o'clock on the first day that Angus Fitzgerald strolled into the court-house rooms where the bazaar was held. He had come more as a matter of duty than pleasure. He was four-and-twenty years of age—a dark-haired good-looking Irishman, with an income the daughter of a duke need not be ashamed to share. He had, moreover, the reputation of being manly, straightforward, and amiable. In short, not only the townspeople of Clashmore, but the whole county, looked on him as one of the most desirable matches in the neighbourhood.



He had scarcely entered the room when the mayor, who had just been victimised by Ellen Cantwell, nodded towards the young man and said to her :

“Now, Miss Cantwell, there is a splendid chance for you. You see that young man who has just come in ; that is Mr. Fitzgerald, the son of Mrs. Fitzgerald of Bawn. He ought to be good for a fiver. If I had his income and his youth I could deny nothing to Miss Cantwell.” With a gallant bow the mayor moved off, and the girl turned towards the door, and began making her way to the lord of Bawn.

As soon as she got to where he was quietly moving forward in the human current, she said : “Mr. Fitzgerald, will you be so kind and charitable as to take a ticket from me for a beautiful clock presented to the charity by Mrs. Fitzgerald ?”

He smiled, looked down, and put his hand in his pocket as a matter of course. After years spent in foreign countries, it was pleasant to hear his native tongue spoken so prettily. As a further


matter of course, he ought to have taken money out of his pocket and bought a crown's worth of tickets of the petitioner; instead of which he drew his hand empty out of his pocket, stepped out of the current of people, and said: "Why?"

The mayor had been the first to recognise him, she had been the first to accost him.

"Oh, because it is for charity; and then the clock is most lovely. It is gilt-bronze. It strikes the hours, half-hours, and quarter-hours. The pendulum is a gilt Cupid in a bronze swing, and on the top is Old Father Time, whose beard and hair and head are of solid silver, and who mows with his scythe at the hours, half, and quarter-hours."

"But I hate striking clocks. Old Father Time is one of the gloomiest beings I know; and as to that fabled boy Cupid who went about shooting arrows into hearts, all my principles are against him and his cruelty. Why on earth should I buy tickets for your raffle?"

"Then there's the charity. If you will not



give me something because of this beautiful clock that strikes the hours, half-hours, and quarter-hours, give me the money for charity. Think of the dreadful weather. Last year the Sisters gave fifty pounds in coal alone."

He bent over her, and drawing his brows close together, said in a measured impressive voice: "Look here, I'll let you into a great secret; you are not to tell it to a soul. I am an awful hypocrite. You were the first person in this room to ask me for charity. I therefore take you into my confidence. But you can't expect to have my confidence and my money. I shall spend a pound at each table in the room but yours. Not a penny at yours. You understand? Now, good-bye for the present. May I tell you how I get on later, to-night?"

"Yes," she answered, a little timidly. She thought he must be mad, a little mad.

"Respect my confidence," he said gravely.


"I will," she answered, in a state of bewilderment.

He passed away quietly from her side. For a few minutes she was too much surprised and disquieted to attend to her duties, and she stood idly looking out of a window.

When she had sufficiently recovered she turned round and re-began her solicitations.

At four o'clock a bell rang to intimate that the rooms were about to close. Ellen Cantwell made her way hastily to Mrs. Fennessey in order to know how the business of the stall had prospered. The room had already begun to clear. All the patrons but one had left the tables. At the opposite side of the room, talking and laughing lightly, stood young Fitzgerald, with his back to her, throwing for a large musical-box.

That night he kept his word. He went to every stall in the bazaar, and threw for every prize in the room, but never once went to her table. Now and then they encountered one another in the crowd. On these occasions he always stopped to tell her briefly what he had



been doing, and the names of the things for which he had thrown, and whether he was highest or lowest; for there usually was a prize for the thrower of the lowest, as well as for him who threw the highest.

Young Fitzgerald did not visit the fair next day, and his absence was a source of great relief to Ellen. While he was in the room the previous day she had been in a state of continued disquiet. Why should he single her out as the confidante of his hypocrisy? She was in no small measure afraid of him.

But, to her annoyance, he came in on the night of the second day. The raffles closed at ten, the auction took place from ten to eleven, and after eleven dancing began. It was past nine when the owner of Bawn arrived. Ellen with a bouquet, and a book of tickets in her left hand, was making a final round of the room when she came upon him.

"Old friends like you and me may shake hands," he said; "will you shake hands with me?"

She smiled, and held out her hand timidly to him.


"Thank you," he said, "I am glad you have allowed me to shake hands with you. For you see before you an altered man: I have cast aside my hypocrisy, and am going to be awfully sincere this evening."

"Then," she said, glancing up with one of those quiet half-shy half-frightened looks which made her so charming, "come to our table and throw."

"Throw! oh bless me, no! I ruined myself throwing yesterday. I have come here to-day to try and get something back in money or goods. That was what I meant by saying I had come in my true character to-day. Now, watch me, and see if I throw away a single penny this evening. What a wretched bouquet you have! Where did you get it? Let me look at it."

"Father got it for me from the nursery."

"I am so sorry I did not think of it in time,



and you should have had one from Covent Garden."

She looked up, looked down, blushed, and seemed confused.

"Surely," he said, "it would have been only common politeness for me to get a bouquet for you, when you are so good as to take charge of the clock my mother gave. Of course it would have been too late to telegraph for one yesterday; all I can do now is to prevent your carrying this one. Why, I could have got old Connolly the gardener to make you a better one than this. But I won't steal your bouquet. Will you give it to me for a charitable purpose, for the purpose of this bazaar?"

"But you say it is of no value. How can it be of any possible use to the bazaar?"

"Let me try what I can do with it."

"Very well. I know you will get nothing for it. There's ten o'clock. I must run back to my table."

For several minutes all was confusion at the

tables, where they were closing the raffles and declaring the winners and the ties. The latter were to be decided next day.

In twenty minutes the auction was in full swing. The stalls all round the great room had been swept clean, and what had remained undisposed of was hurried up to a table by which stood the auctioneer, hammer in hand.

The bids came briskly, the sale was quick, still at eleven o'clock all had not been sold. The auctioneer declared his intention of remaining at his post until the last smoking-cap, coral and bells, and pair of slippers, had been got rid of, and furthermore, he informed such visitors as were anxious to retire to the dancing-room, that it would not be thrown open until the last vestige of the things by his side had been cleared away.

"As I'm a living man I'll sell everything on this table before anyone leaves this room, or the dancing-room is opened. Stewards, see that no one leaves this room until I give leave."


He proceeded with the sale. As became a

good local auctioneer, he was familiar with every person in the room, and in the course of bidding he made frequent appeals by name to those around him. More than once he tried to induce the young owner of Bawn to offer, but in vain. Fitzgerald only shook his head pleasantly, and did not shake it in the way agreeable to auctioneers.

At last the end had arrived. The auctioneer looked with comical ruefulness at the clear table beside him, saying: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry to say I have nothing more to offer you. Stop! I said I'd sell everything on that table, and I'll keep my word. I see one more article. Will you hand that, if you please? Come, now for the dance. I have only this to sell. You take it as you find it. I guarantee nothing. What shall we say for it? Some kind gentleman set us going."

"A shilling."

"A shilling. Thank you, sir. Any advance on a shilling?"



"Five."

"Thank you, sir. Any advance on five shillings? Now, gentlemen, any advance on five shillings? Going at five shillings. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, you haven't favoured me with a bid this evening. What do you say?"

"Guineas."

"Thank you, Mr. Fitzgerald; and at five guineas it's gone." Turning to the steward, acting as clerk, the auctioneer dictated the entry: "Mr. Fitzgerald of Bawn, a bouquet, five guineas." And the auction was over.

When Angus Fitzgerald met Miss Cantwell in the dancing-room she was engaged for the first four dances.

"You'll give me the fifth?" he said.

"Yes."

"All right. I'll go smoke until then."

When at last the fourth dance was over, he, holding the bouquet for which he had given five guineas in his hand, came and claimed her.

She was quite uneasy and trembling as she took his arm.

"You see," he said, "I have carried out my programme. I told you I came here to make good my losses of yesterday, and I have done so. I put this bouquet of yours among the things for sale."

She looked up and tried to smile. "But you paid very dearly for it. You have lost again."

"I have made more money by the transaction than the whole proceeds of the bazaar. I would not now give this bouquet for a thousand pounds." He raised it to his lips and kissed it.

She held down her head and blushed deeply. Fortunately for her the band began to play, and he led her out among the dancers.

When the music ceased he said: "Where is the next blank on your card?"

"We are to have but eight altogether. They will not allow us to stay late. The rest are all promised."

"Your father will take you home?"

"Yes."

"Ah, then there is nothing more to wait for. I will go home." And, having resigned her into the hands of her new partner, he left the room, keeping the drooping bouquet pressed to his lips as he went.


Next day everyone in Clashmore knew more about the story of the bouquet than either of those directly concerned in it. Some went so far as to say he had proposed to her. She had been very popular, but this did much to cool the general ardour in her regard. And when, after this, there followed more civility to her and her father from Fitzgerald of Bawn, the good people of Clashmore began to toss their heads, and talk of upstarts and so on.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked Mr. Cantwell to shoot over his grounds; and Mr. Cantwell, though no great sportsman, went, and came back highly gratified. Fitzgerald dropped in to see Cantwell, and went home to luncheon with the latter. The young man took the father and daughter out for

many a drive when the weather was fine; and when June came round, and the band once more played in the barrack-square, Miss Cantwell walked up and down with Mr. Fitzgerald of Bawn as though she were an heiress in her own right to the first property in the county, and could trace her name back to the earliest English settlers, and thence to the Conquest.

But when the summer had gone by, and autumn was almost over, and nothing definite had been arranged between the two, people began to shake their heads gravely, and say young Fitzgerald was only amusing himself with the townsman's daughter, and that the result of the whole thing would be a woman's broken heart.

At last it came to be winter once more, and once more matrons and maids were busy about the Christmas bazaar. Nothing had yet been settled, as far as the town knew, between the owner and the buyer of the bouquet last year, and people had now made up their minds that it was a shame. But at the bazaar all had to admit Miss



Cantwell had never looked happier or brighter, that her father was in excellent spirits, and Mr. Fitzgerald in the pleasantest of good-humour.

This year Ellen Cantwell was tout for a table at which were to be raffled a silver candelabra and a diamond gipsy-ring : whoever made the highest throw got the candelabra, whoever threw the lowest got the ring. Both prizes were the gift of a "lady benefactor, who wished to remain anonymous." The reason Miss Cantwell had been attached to this table was that naturally she got the best table in the show ; but this year, as last, it had been supplied by Mrs. Fitzgerald, and the committee felt it would be unfair, unkind, to ask Miss Cantwell to assist at the raffle of prizes presented by Mrs. Fitzgerald. Then, naturally, the second-best table, that of the candelabra and ring, was allotted to her. With Miss Cantwell, as on the former occasion, was associated Mrs. Fennessey.

To Mrs. Fennessey Fitzgerald devoted himself



all day and all the evening of the first day. He took little notice of Ellen, but brought Mrs. Fennessey jellies and biscuits and wine as though his very life depended on her being in the most brilliant physical condition. On the morning of the second day he asked Mrs. Fennessey what was the lowest throw so far. It was a high one—fourteen.

He took the dice-box, smiled, and said, "I mean to win that ring of yours, Mrs. Fennessey."

His twenty-eighth throw was thirteen.

"That will do," he said, "for the present."

The next thrower, a boy in knickerbockers, cast twelve. Fitzgerald took up the box, put down a five-pound note, and calling out gaily to Mrs. Fennessey not to cheat, began. At last he threw eleven.

"How do we stand now, Mrs. Fennessey?" he asked.

"You owe me seventeen shillings in addition to the note. You have had a hundred-and-seventeen throws. Only it is for charity, Mr. Fitzgerald,

I would say you are taking more trouble about the ring than it is worth."

"It isn't for charity, I assure you, Mrs. Fennessey. This is purely a business affair. I must win that ring."

When four o'clock came he was still the lowest. At seven the bazaar opened, the last time for that year. At a quarter to nine a cavalry lieutenant whom Ellen brought to the table threw ten.

"How many books of tickets have you got, Miss Cantwell?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Eight books of twenty each," she answered.

"And how many have you, Mrs. Fennessey?"

"Fourteen of twenty each."

"I'll buy the lot and throw till the last moment; for I must win if it is possible."

He sat down and began to throw as quickly as possible. At a quarter to ten he cast nine. With a smile of pleasure he drew himself up to his full height. "Virtually the raffle is closed, Mrs. Fennessey."

"Yes, virtually."

"You think there are no more tickets out?"

"I am almost sure. All the tickets not sold in the room were thrown for early in the evening."

"Then I'll wait till the end," he said.

When the clock struck ten, he said: "Now Mrs. Fennessey, will you give me the ring?"

"It is not usual to give anything won until to-morrow," she replied.

"Here is my I O U for it. Thank you."

The auction had just begun when he and Ellen found themselves in a quiet part of the room, behind the screen near a window.

He said: "This night twelve months I carried a bouquet for your sake. Will you to-night, Nellie, for my sake carry this ring until I give you a plainer one with a dearer meaning? Will you, Nellie, my love?"

"Oh! but what will your mother say?"

"Is that your only difficulty?"

"Yes."



"When first I spoke to her, she said I'd change my mind in a month. I told her I would never change. She asked me to allow myself a year to try myself, and I promised. Then I asked her to give this ring and that candelabra, and I made up my mind to win for my darling's engaged ring the one my mother had given. Are you quite content now?"

"Perfectly."

"My Nellie, my own darling Nellie! You will not keep me long waiting? I have waited a whole year. Your father I am sure has no objection. You will let me give you that other ring in a month or two?"

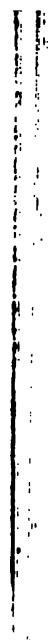
"Yes."

Someone approached. It was a military tread—the tread of a cavalry man.

"By Jove," said the approaching man, "some other fellow WON BY NINE!"



THE EVES OF
TWO CHRISTMAS NUMBERS



THE EVES OF
TWO CHRISTMAS NUMBERS.

FOR some years I was sub-editor of the *Illustrated Social Review*. It is devoted to—— But I will not stop to puff the *Review*, explain its scope, or describe its method. The completeness of my disinterestedness will be felt when I assure my reader that I have received all the money I ever earned of it ; that there is no likelihood of my earning any more ; and that in the week preceding Christmas last year I ceased to be connected with the paper.

In justice to myself I must say that my retirement was not caused by anything within


the jurisdiction of my prudence or ability. I resigned; and I resigned because I was suffering from fierce nervous excitement, which, my doctor soothingly assured me, threatened either my life or my sanity; he could not say for certain which.

"If I resign," said I to my doctor, "I lose the majority of my income."

"If you don't resign," said he, in a tone that indicated his final opinion was in the words, "you will go over to either the great majority—the dead—or the lesser majority, the majority of the living—the fools."

I was not alone in the world. My people at home took an interest in me, and looked to me for housekeeping money; and I had been too long connected with the *Illustrated Social Review* not to have a well-defined notion of my duty as a social being; so I made up my mind (having some left still) to take my doctor's advice, and to live—and to live in sanity.

If there were any likelihood of my being able to resume my duties in six months, I have no



doubt that the owner of the paper would have consented to accept the services of a substitute while I was recruiting my health ; but the condition of the case did not allow of this.


“If,” said my doctor to me, earlier in the case than the period from which I last quoted words of his, “you spend one more night in that office under any circumstances, I will not answer for the consequences ; or rather I *will* answer for the consequences, and say that they must be disastrous.”

This decision had narrowed the question to two issues : Was the paper to seek a new office, or was I to seek a new paper ? The reply was sadly obvious to me. I must go. True, the paper had changed from the old office to this new one only a week before ; but that change had been owing to the expansion of the paper and the necessity for more extensive offices, and had had nothing whatever to do with the nerves of any one of the staff.

In the week preceding last Christmas twelve-

months a certain event took place. I shall now relate that event here.

The Christmas number of the *Illustrated Social Review* appeared each year the week before Christmas. It was not an "extra number," but the ordinary weekly issue swollen to about double the usual size. The literary matter of the Christmas number did not differ very largely from the literary matter of the ordinary weekly part. There was usually a long story illustrating some striking social question, and this story formed the only literary innovation on a routine number. The chief attraction of the enlarged paper lay in its engravings, of which there were a double number, and its coloured plate, a feature peculiar to the Christmas issue. As sub-editor it was my duty to read all proofs, see the paper "made up" according to the instructions of my chief, and be present in the printing-office when the paper went to press. As soon as a perfect copy of the paper was brought to me by the foreman printer (in case it was all



right), I initialled it, told the printer to "Go on." Then my responsibility was at an end, and I took my way home.

We went to press on Thursday night in each week. Sometimes I was able to get away from the office at ten o'clock; often I did not find myself in a position to initial the sheets until past midnight. The Christmas number being the most important of the year, I rarely could leave until two or three in the morning. My chief usually looked in at about ten o'clock just to see that all was in train, and then left me. On Thursday night, the week before Christmas, 1876, the editor came at ten, we had a somewhat lengthened chat, he looked at the last proof-slips, and then left me to revise the pages and see the whole paper put together and "pulled" before I took my leave.

It was a quarter-past twelve o'clock when he and I shook hands, and he went slowly down the iron-edged stairs.

The printing-office was in a court off Fleet

Street. In all the world there is no stiller place at night than one of these ghostly courts off Fleet Street, if the silence is not broken by the tear and clatter of printing machinery.

Winchester Court at the time my chief left was resounding to the rattle of two-dozen machines. The room I was sitting in trembled like a frightened horse, the glass in the window clattered, and the whole air seemed torn by waves and cross-waves of jarring noises. In the basement of the house in which I sat three large machines were at work ; on the ground-floor four clanged and whirred ; by my side, on the first-floor, a gas-engine snorted, and shook its iron rack, and struggled like a chained wild beast striving to escape ; while a number of lithographic machines croaked and muttered all round me like a swarm of monster bull-frogs and a flight of gigantic mosquitoes.

This uproar of machinery on every side made it necessary to speak loudly in order to make oneself heard. The tone of ordinary conversation would seem a hoarse indistinct whisper. No

sound from the court outside could reach me, and no sound I could make would have any chance of reaching ears not within the four walls of my room.

Just before the editor left me the foreman printer had been down to take away some proofs and speak with the chief and myself. As the foreman was going away I had said to him :

“Well, Mr. Bain, when will you have anything more for me to look at?”

“Not for an hour, sir,” was his answer ; so that when I found myself alone, I looked round the room to try and find something I might read. With a sigh I resigned myself to fate. There was nothing to read, nothing to do for an hour.

Although it was cold and raw and damp abroad, the room in which I sat was bright and warm. Indeed it was almost too warm ; the steam all around gave the place the close feeling of an oven. I had always noticed that after spending an hour or two in that room I felt as weak and weary as though I had sauntered

all day through a strange city to meet someone who never came.

The room was not more than twelve feet by twelve. In the centre stood a shabby writing-table at which I sat, opposite me was the door ajar. A gas-jet burned on the landing without ; no other door opened on that landing. Between the table and the door stood a chair ; across the high window stretched a large deep desk, which filled up that whole side of the room ; on my right-hand side, as I sat, stretched from floor to ceiling shelves upon which lay old wood-blocks and stereotypes of blocks. My table was jammed up against the shelf-case ; into the room on my left side a press projected, leaving only about a foot and a half between the corner of the press and my table.

A particularly ill-used correspondent arose to my mind. There were pens, ink, and paper on the table. I took a sheet of paper and began a letter to him. I had just begun ; I had written only these words : "No doubt you have made up

your mind that, as a final act of malicious unfriendliness, I gave instructions to those around me that my death should be concealed from you," when someone knocked softly, very softly, at the door. Thinking it was a boy from the composing-room to ask a question, I said "Come in!" without raising my head.

Although my face was bent over the table, my eyes fixed on the paper, I was conscious that the door opened slowly, that the person who had knocked had not entered, and that it was a man, not a boy, as I had at first imagined. I raised my eyes. A low-sized, square, powerful-looking man of about thirty-five stood with an air of great humility in the doorway, holding his hat in his right hand in front, and keeping his left hand behind him out in the landing.

Something about this man made me observe him very closely. At the time I did not know why his appearance claimed my attention so strongly. He was almost in tatters. His boots were open at the toes; his trousers jagged at

the heels and between the ankles; his hat, a soft felt one, was without a lining and green with age. His coat and waistcoat were of a dingy yellowish tweed; the coat frayed at the wrists; all the buttons gone out of the waistcoat, which was secured by a piece of twine tied round the waist. From underneath a shabby yellow beard a dirty blue scarf fell, and occupied the whole open space of the waistcoat. His face was white and calm, the forehead being singularly white and well formed. The two most remarkable things about this man were his attitude and his eyes. The attitude was that of a fallen angel unprotesting against his fate; the eyes were those of a man aspiring to reach heaven by audacity.

“What can this man be? What does he want here?” were the questions I put to myself. “I can’t guess, and I don’t like him,” were my mute replies. I was weak and low and nervous. I looked at the window—no chance of escape that way. I looked at the door—he barred it

up completely, and one blow from such an arm as held his hat would dispose of me. I knew the outer door was open; I knew he was not a printer. I knew no one was likely to pass up or down that staircase for a long time. I knew my voice might as well be buried six feet under ground as in that room, for all it would avail me to summon assistance. What had that man in his left hand? Why did he keep his hand so strangely behind his back? What did this man want with me? I had never seen him before.

"May I come in, sir?" asked the man, in a dull hoarse voice.

"Yes," I answered. "What can I do for you? Are you sure you have not mistaken the room?"

"You are the sub-editor of the *Illustrated Social Review*?" he asked, crossing the threshold, and taking the inner handle of the door in his right hand under the hat. While he stood thus sideways, he still kept the left hand pointed towards the passage, and out of my sight.

"Yes," I answered again; and repeated:
"What can I do for you?"

"May I say a few words to you—in private?"

"I am quite alone."

"May I shut the door? I don't want any
one to see me here."

I reviewed the case as swiftly as he spoke. If he had any harmful intention he could carry it out, in spite of me; he could bang the door that moment and spring on me. If he had no harmful intention it was indifferent to me whether the door was open or shut. Thus in either case I might as well assent. I merely nodded an affirmative.

Still keeping that left hand concealed from me, he shut the door, latched it carefully, and then turned the key! He stooped down near the door, deposited whatever he had in his hand on the ground, and approached the table. On the ground near the door I saw, when he moved a little aside, a cup of tea, and in the saucer against the cup a large piece of bread.


A sharp pang of pity for this man went through me when I found what he had carried so cautiously and so secretly. I rose, went to the door, took up the cup and saucer, set them on the table, and, placing a chair for him, said :

“Sit down and take your tea while you talk to me. No one will want to come in here for an hour. Now what do you wish to say to me?”

He looked at me awhile out of those strange eyes, in which for a moment the audacity was a little subdued. He drew a long breath, and then spoke :

“Although you see me as I am now, I am a man of good education. I have never been regularly connected with the editorial part of any paper, but I have had something to do with newspapers for a good while. I am doing a little reading here now. I did not want those common printers to see me in here speaking to you. Common men are so common, aren't they ?”

I looked away from the poor fellow's tattered coat and starved bold eyes, answering “Yes.”




"Common men are fearfully common. I was once in a poorhouse, and I know. I didn't want these working printers, if they passed up or down, to see me talking to a gentleman ; they make fun of me so. Do you know there is a conspiracy against me ? Did you ever hear that ?"

I looked back to him swiftly, and thought : "The man is mad ; the door is locked, and the yells of a Titan could reach no human ears ! Heaven be merciful to me and compassionate towards those who depend upon me !" I said aloud, assuming a tone of sympathy : "If I were you, I should not bother about those common men. Your tea is getting cold. Won't you drink it, and tell me what you want to see me about ?"

He shook himself, and passed his hand quickly nervously across his white forehead : shook himself again ; then he fixed his daring eyes on mine, and burst out suddenly and so rapidly that I could scarcely follow him :

"You are sub-editor of the *Illustrated Social Review* ; why don't you try and do something



for the unfortunate? You are sub-editor of the *Illustrated Social Review*; why aren't you the friend of the mad? Tell me that!" he shouted excitedly, thrusting his white face close to mine.


Was it my own fright or his breath that stirred in my hair? My case seemed almost hopeless. The eyes, which had been aspiring, had turned first audacious and then threatening. All he need do was to push that table violently upon me, jam me between it and the wall, seize me by my shoulders, spring upon the table, and beat out my brains against the wall. I was utterly dazed, basilisked, by those fierce eyes set in that immobile white face. Already I fancied his hand at my throat, felt the first dull, sickening, darkening, deadening crash of my skull against that wall behind me.

For a moment a vision of my home floated between me and the pallid stark face of the maniac. I saw my wife and my little ones stretching their arms out to me across an impassable gulf. I saw the agonies of ruin and

despair and woe distraught for loss of love sweep over the face of my wife. I heard the shrill cries of my round-cheeked children as I sank for ever from their view. As I dipped below the verge of love and memory, I called out aloud: "My darlings, my darlings, good-bye!"

Swiftly the vision passed. Suddenly the attitude of the man altered. He shivered and drew back from me, stood up, shivered again. Then, covering his face with his hand for a moment, he remained immovable. In a few seconds his chest and shoulders began to heave, and I could hear him sob. Through his sobs he spoke: "My darlings, my darlings, good-bye! They did not let me say good-bye to you. They pounced upon me in the middle of the night, and carried me off and locked me up for three whole years, and when I came out all my darlings were dead."

His arms fell to his side, as though he were shot through the heart. He threw up his white face, clenched his fists, and buried one under the



breast of the mean waistcoat ; then, raising his other hand clenched to heaven, he shouted : " He took my wife and my children from me ! He killed them when I was locked up—he, John Kempston, did it ; and, by the Maker of us two, John Kempston and me, I'll leave that in his heart some night ! "

With an action so swift that I could not follow it, he plucked his hand out of his waistcoat. I saw something glitter above my head, and before I had time even to feel dread the point of a long bowie-knife was buried an inch in the table, and the haft trembling between his face and mine.

He put his two hands on the table, leaned down, and glared at the trembling blade. He snored and shook with a heavy tremor.

A knock at the door. A second knock. The handle of the door turned. The man roused himself, looked round the room very slowly. " Say wait a moment," he whispered to me.

" Wait a moment ! "

He worked the knife out of the table quickly,

shut it up, and slipped it inside his waistcoat. Then, taking up his cup and saucer, he whispered: "It's one of those common men. I'll tell him a lie to account for the door being locked; and you can stick to the lie." He opened the door, turned to the foreman printer and said, touching his mean waistcoat: "I was showing this gentleman my invention for soothing pain; and as I haven't taken out a patent for it yet, he was kind enough to suggest my locking the door. Are there any rough pulls waiting, sir?"

It was many days before I regained my customary peace and balance of mind after that disturbing night; and even when I had got back my usual tone in daylight, my nights were very trying for a long time.

I had always been nervous and imaginative, and it was a source of wonder to those who knew me well, and to myself, that I so rapidly recovered from the shock. But for months my nights were bad. If I sat up last at home, as I often was

obliged to do, I dreaded to leave the room and the gaslight in which I sat. If a door opened or a mouse ran across the ceiling, I looked up with a start, sure I should see the rigid white face, the madman's blazing eye, the sharp flash of glittering brightness through the air; and then I felt the blade between my shoulders—not in the table, but between my shoulders—with the whole of the madman's weight pressing down upon the weapon.

My dreams were even still more trying. One in particular absolutely shattered me; and when I awoke after it I lay trembling, sleepless, amazed with terror for hours.

In this dream I was sitting with my children and my wife in the shade of a fine sycamore-tree that stood at the top of a low hill. My wife was standing in front of me, all smiles and happiness; my little ones romping about in the grass. Suddenly the expression of my wife's countenance changed. Her face became distorted with a hideous dread, her eyes fixed on a spot behind my back. I could not move, I could not turn

my head, I could not see the spectacle which fascinated her horror; but I knew what it was, and I suffered the pains of a thousand deaths in my helplessness to move, my inability to see the monster, and the unspeakable agony of sympathy in my wife's frozen unredeemable fear. Would not some blessed messenger of kindly fate kill her, and put her out of this awful unrealised certainty?

Meanwhile I heard him crawling up behind me. I knew he was only a few feet off. He drew nearer, and I could feel the stirring of the grass I sat on as his feet went through it. I could feel his warm breath upon my neck, and yet he did not strike. I looked at my wife, and felt an aching between my shoulders for that blow. Great heavens, why did he not strike me, strike her—anything at all to shatter this hideous spell, and take me out of this bitterness of looking at that face so frozen and so dear! Kill us, oh Death! Wither us, oh Heaven, and deliver us from this suspended rending of the spirit!

Suddenly the cloudless sky of noon grew dark and became convulsed, the thunders rent it open, and, looking up, I saw the vault of heaven formed of prodigious black jagged rocks that swung and whirled towards the west, while a sound as of ten thousand thunderstorms shouted above the prodigious ruin.

In the tumult the muscles of my limbs were loosed. I sprang up and turned upon him, wrenched the knife from his clutch, and drove it home into his heart.

Presently the ruin of the heavens was complete, and all became still. A colourless void stretched above me, and in the middle of this void hung a broad green moon, the light of which was a plague of reproaches to the soul. This great broad moon hung motionless in space. This light and this moon wore the expression of eternal wrath, and I was destined to dwell for ever beneath that loathsome luminary, bathed in that corroding light!

I looked at my feet. Not a man! Whom


had I slain, that my fate should be so incommunicably terrible?

The light of the moon grew stronger, and by it now I saw half of the knife rising out of the bosom of—my wife!

I had slain my wife, and for ever and for ever I was to sit under that obscene moon, contaminated by that degrading light, and gaze upon the death-agony of my slaughtered innocent! God of all mercies, is not this too much!

And with yells I awoke, to rush about the room and jabber like a fool, and find rest in no attitude but on my knees.

I wonder I did not go mad. The brains of many men have been turned by less. After that memorable Thursday night I often debated with myself whether I should take any steps against the man who had so terrified me. But in reality he had neither done anything to me nor threatened me. I made inquiries, and found that his name was William Dee; that he had been in a lunatic asylum for three years, during




which time his wife and two children died ; and that about a year ago he had been discharged as cured. He was regarded as "odd," "strange," "touched ;" but everyone to whom I spoke looked on him as perfectly harmless.

The form of his craze was peculiar, almost unique ; he was mad about madness itself. Any allusion to insanity threw his mind at once off its balance. He had first shown symptoms of insanity about five years before. Its earliest form was a delusion that every dwelling-house he entered had a madhouse attached to it, in which were confined members of the family afflicted with mental malady. The aggravated form of this delusion followed ; and then he fancied that not only had every private house its own private madhouse, but that the inmates of the latter were cruelly and basely ill-treated. Then he commenced to preach a crusade against these private lunatic asylums. He failed to attract followers. He essayed the deliverance of the captives himself, and selected for the first attempt

the house of Mr. John Kempston of Long Acre. Mr. Kempston called in the police and handed William Dee over to them. The police sent him to the parish, and the parish to Colney Hatch. His belief that Mr. Kempston stopped him at the outset of his great career, and that Mr. Kempston was personally the whole cause of his having been locked up, made him in his moments of excitement swear undying hatred and thirst of revenge against that man, who, however, was quite beyond the reach of Dee's anger, as he had emigrated to New Zealand soon after the unhappy Dee was first confined. It was only in the great pressure of business in the week before Christmas that Dee got employment at our printing-office. The week after Christmas he was gone, so that my chance of any more trouble from him was slight indeed.

In December next year the *Illustrated Social Review* changed publication-office and printing-office. The printing-office was now in Deerhound Court, Fleet Street. As Christmas approached,



the Christmas of 1877, I was too busy to give much thought to my health. Several friends had remarked that I looked thin and worn. But I explained this to myself and them by saying I was greatly overworked; for not only had I then the ordinary work of our own paper, and the preparation of the Christmas number, but I had been employed to edit and write a good deal for a trade annual, and I was greatly worn down altogether. It is a strange thing that, although I then looked upon myself as completely recovered from the effect of the events which occurred the Thursday night preceding Christmas, 1876, I never ran low physically from any cause without more or less suffering a relapse into the wretched state of nervous timidity which followed immediately upon the shock a year ago.

As in the former printing-office, we had an editorial room in the new one. It was, however, situated differently. In the old office it had been on the first-floor. Here it was on the third, being the highest but the attic. It was a long

narrow room. At one end a window looked into the silent deserted court. At the other end were the stairs to the upper-floor, not partitioned off from the room. My table stood in the window, and about twenty feet from the head of the staircase leading down through the stair-well, also not partitioned off. Although I call this the editorial room, of course we had another and much better room at the publishing-office; but the one at the printing-office was the real one for hard work, and all the night work had to be done here, in order that I might be handy to the printers. The proprietors of the *Review* had signed a twelve months' contract with our new printer, and the use of this room was part of the contract. Indeed, we could get no other room in the house; and high and bleak as it was, we were glad to secure it.

The floor below was the printer's counting-house, shut up for the night; the floor above, an attic lumber-room.

We were much more forward with the work

this year than we had been last. On Thursday night before Christmas week, 1877, the editor went away at ten o'clock, leaving me in charge. "You'll be able to get off at about twelve," said he, as he tied his muffler round his neck at the top of the unprotected stair-well. While he was descending I heard a clock strike ten. I shouted to him to send up the foreman. He answered "All right;" and for the first time I was alone by night in the new office.

The room was in strong contrast, and the surroundings in stronger contrast, to the room and surroundings of that day twelve months. The chamber was long and bleak, and an oppressive silence filled the court. In the basement of this house the machines groaned and muttered; but the sound was deadened and afar off: it seemed to desire to conceal itself from notice. I felt I should like to have had a dog or a child with me. It was very lonely up there—very dreary and lonely up there, away from everyone.

At last I heard a foot ascending the stairs,

and in a few moments the hard features of the foreman rose above the level of the floor.

He came in, and we had a short chat about the work. As he was going he said with a grin, while he wiped his hands in his apron :

"You're quiet enough up here, sir. There's not more row here now than under the dome of St. Paul's at this moment."

"When shall I have the proofs of the pages up?" I asked.

"I'll send you up two or three in half-an-hour," said the foreman, as he disappeared down the stairs.

Once more I was alone in that long narrow room. I had nothing to do for half-an-hour.

"As quiet as under the dome of St. Paul's at this moment," I thought, adopting the notion of the foreman. "The grave is not so quiet as the vast chill concave of that dome now," I followed on, indulging my imagination.

There was only one gas-jet in the room, and that was on my table, so that the end of the

room near the stair-well was in comparative darkness. I stared down into the dimness, and continued, following up the idea the foreman had started :

“What silence, what abysses of silence there are in that great chasm of darkness, the inex-plorable dome! For no earthly consideration would I sit on one of those chairs now, with my back to all the echoing voices and ghastly tomb-encrusted walls.”

I felt myself shiver, and cast down my eyes for awhile to steady my thought. I strove to drive the idea from me ; but it had seized firm hold of my imagination, and would not go.

“For no prospect of all this world’s happiness would I go into that weird Whispering Gallery at this awful hour. Fancy sitting with your ear to that cold vocal wall, and gathering the insinuated murmur of words too terrible for daylight, too tremendous for human lips! Fancy half-hearing and half-losing the sounds of such words, and half-gaining and half-missing their

prodigious meaning! Fancy one's poor dumb crushed-up soul clinging to these portentous walls, and trembling upon the brink of a revelation so overwhelming that the systems of the suns could not hear it uttered, and endure!

The cold sweat now fell down my forehead.

I raised my eyes, and saw ascending by the stairway through the ceiling the legs of a man!

At that sight the last resources of my physical powers failed. I could not stir to save my life. I had no desire to stir. I felt numbed and deadened, and sustained in consciousness by only one desire, a supreme curiosity. What was going to happen? Who had gone through the ceiling? What would he do presently? Would there be a fierce explosion suddenly, a rending of this accursed house from roof to cellar, and a wild dispersion of its rotting beams and mouldered bricks? Or would a thin ribbon of smoke fall slowly from that square space of darkness above, and wriggle along the ceiling towards me, towards

nothing, to be followed and devoured by a hissing snake of flame?

I heard a scratching sound; then the blank darkness fell away from the head of the stairs like a veil, and I could see up, could see the hideous unplastered rafters and the loathsomely cobwebs, and upon the rafters and among the cobwebs the distorted shadow of a man.

If the chair on which I sat had begun slowly rising towards the ceiling, and my only chance of avoiding being crushed to death was to stand up off that chair, I could not have done it. To save my life I could not take my eyes off that awful opening and the unintelligible motions of the appalling shadow; for if once I took my eyes off that place, that chasm of stifling vacuity, how could I turn my eyes back on it again, how could I dare to uplift my eyes to that gaping mouth of horrors? If I did so look away and look up, what should I see? What supreme spectacle would be revealed to me? Or, worse

than that, worse than anything else, perhaps all would be dark again, as though the blind darkness, the voracious maw of slimy quietness, had absorbed him who ventured within the suffocating breath of its noisome depths.


I do not know how long I remained thus spellbound, but it must have been more than quarter of an hour. All that time the shadow of the man was ceaselessly moving hither and thither, up and down. Anon the arms seemed bare and full of vital vigour, now clad and limp and helpless. Anon the reflection, broken by the rafters and distorted by the cobwebs, was that of a pair of naked legs, now of legs loosely robed and supple.

At last it became plain that there were two figures in the loft.

I could now make out that the partly nude figure had on nothing but a shirt; this was the active figure. The other lay apparently on the ground close to the candle, and never

stirred save when moved by the other. What could all this mean? There was no sound of a struggle. There had been no sound of a struggle. Had the corpse—yes, there was no use in disguising the matter from my fears—had the corpse been in that loft before that figure had disappeared up that ladder; or had the body been borne through this room on shoulders belonging to the legs I had seen? Was that body now cold with the revolting coldness of a death-stab a month old, or warm with the smile of life still upon its lips, the bloom of life still upon its cheeks?

Just then the stillness of this upper place was broken by a yell of enraptured rage. I saw a flash of keen cool light dash among the rafters, and then I saw the shadow of the naked arm spring aloft with something long and sharp-pointed in the hand. Presently this swept down to the accompaniment of a scream of hate. I heard the blade tear through and through, and



bite deep into the plank. I watched to see the first red trickle through the cracked ceiling; for now the body was that of no man dead, but of one drugged, or stunned by other means.

I lost all thought of my own personality. I may say I had no longer any feeling of being present at this scene. I was no more than a pair of eyes that could not turn away from this square opening, and an intelligence swallowed up in the passionless contemplation of what the eyes revealed.

Here the light in the loft went out. But I heard other blows struck in the dark. At last the blows ceased, and I heard a sound as of some body dragged across the floor.

Two legs fell partly down through the trap-door—legs wanting the feet! Then the body and the limp powerless arms.

My eyes never moved, no sound escaped me even when the acme of horror was reached, and I saw a bare left arm buried in the bosom of the figure, and a bare right arm whirled aloft

and strike the bosom with a knife, and then, as the two figures rolled down the stairs into the room, saw that the trunk was headless !

The semi-nude man sprang to his feet, once more raised the blade above his head, and stepping back a pace from the prostrate figure, yelled : " Take your death of me, John Kempston ! " As he uttered the last word he tripped on something, staggered back, and—disappeared. I heard him strike the balustrade, and fall to the flagged bottom of the stair-well. Then all was still.

When they took up the dead body of William Dee from the flags at the bottom of the stairs, they found nothing on it but a shirt. The rest of his clothes he had formed into an effigy upon which to wreak the vengeance he nourished against John Kempston. As in the last year in the old office, so in the present year at the new, he had got a job as extra proof-reader, with permission to sleep in the loft. His work was done, and he received a little money at nine o'clock. It was

supposed he drank, and that the drink overcame his slight stock of reason, and betrayed him into the violence which led to his death.

They found me insensible, with my head bowed on the table. I have not even yet recovered fully.

THE END.

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1

